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A

HISTORY OF FRANCE

BY

G. W. KITCHIN, D.D.

DEAN OF WINCHESTER

VOL. II

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PREFACE.

The History of France down to the Revolution must, on the whole, be the history of her Kings. This is a misfortune for the historian, as it has been for the French people; for there is no constitutional growth to depict; nor such political struggles, as have made England what, for all her faults, she is; nor vigorous local energies and liberties, balancing the central organisation, and giving the nation space to expand naturally.

In the period now before us we have to draw the steady advance of Monarchy as it marches over the ruins of all political life; to describe its splendid age of power and ripeness, and to sketch its swift descent, pressed down by the weight of its own greatness and assaulted by the accumulated griefs of a nation long voiceless and neglected, till in 1793 it reaches the stern tragedy of the scaffold. French History is more personal and royal than the history of other nations. Her Saint Louis, her Louis XI, her Henry the Great, her Louis XIV, are the main figures of her story: and even after the Monarchy has been swept away, the grandeur of the career of Napoleon fascinates all Frenchmen, and to a large extent substitutes the biography of a man for the history of a nation.

Literature must circle round the Court, or languish in cold shade of opposition, happy if only neglected: administration is organised, not to render civil life more easy or men more happy, but that it may find funds for royal wars or royal waste: the French noblesse sink till they become waiters on the providence of Versailles: the Church, the Bar, the Cities, play no duly prominent part; the bulk of the French people remain wretched and obscure. This lack of a popular history gives its special sadness to a chronicle of the career of France: no history in Europe has in it so little brightness; no people in Europe was ever so gay and brilliant.

This work is under very great obligations to the present Bishop of Chester. It is impossible for me to say how much I owe to his exact eye, his prudent and judicious advice, his kind and faithful criticism: here let me record my gratitude, and give expression to my thanks.

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BOOK I.

THE AGE OF LOUIS XI.

INTRODUCTION.

THREE historians illustrate three successive centuries and three successive epochs of French History. For the age of Saint Louis, the days of heroic feudalism, when the earlier monarchy was in highest glory, we have the delightful memoir of the old seneschal of Champagne, the Lord of Joinville. The saintly King, so pure and free from selfishness, so mindful of his people, is faithfully mirrored in the loving record of his friend. Whether the good historian as he sets forth on his first crusade turns round to catch a last glimpse of his castle towers, and feels his heart half-broken as he thinks of his two children there; or whether he bears in his arms the King, worn-out before his time; or stoutly refuses to follow his Lord to his second crusade, telling him plainly that the evils of it would be far greater than the benefits; under whatever aspect we see him, he is always a true gentleman, humane, simple, high-souled, who watches the world with grave observant eyes, as one who knows the dignity of his theme, the epic grandeur of Saint Louis.

A very different age succeeds; it is a time of selfish feudal anarchy, of monarchy abased, of man degraded; an age of so-called chivalry. Joinville's tone and colouring are quite in harmony with his subject, and that subject a true king of men;

but Froissart is the poet of a debased time, in which no great man stands out prominent: son of a painter of blazonry, he draws his pageants, his costumes, festivals, military raids, battles, with an eye to their outward brilliancy and grouping, not to their deeper inward nature. All is clear, bright, and varied; and like a mirror reflecting the gay crowd, there is no depth, and no interpretation. Froissart represents his age, a shallow age, as it displayed itself in France.

Lastly there comes a very different time. The foreign wars are over; cunning is pitted against daring: the age is weary of life, yet full of the fear of death: the first traces of introspection appear, and men shrink back from themselves. Questionings as to the moral bearing of things, as to the political bases of life, precede, in France at least, all enquiry into the deeper problems of religion. Assassinations stain the page of history; men live in daily dread of poison; the Dance of Death is painted on the wall; the arts of corruption are found to be all-powerful; the truth blenches before the lie. The question, so often asked a little later, How shall a Prince rule over his people? first finds a tentative answer in the life of Louis XI, as we read it in the pages of Philip of Commines. He, and a few years later, a very different man, the Florentine Macchiavelli, set themselves to find the solution of this great problem, which is the first to emerge among the elements of modern national life. In substance the two men bring out the same answer. The old world is dying: none but the nimble and the unscrupulous can walk in high places without falling. The Italian draws a more precise picture than that which we can gather from the diffuse pages of the Franco-Burgundian chronicler: the Florentine has also this great advantage over his predecessor, that he loathed the whole thing, and treated it with irony and cynical scorn, while Commines loved it and had his being in it, helping with a mean and vulgar spirit to carry out his bad ideal; he accepted the evil, and traded in it, moralising at the same time with deductions, commonplace yet often false, on the degradation of his age. That moralising all lies

on the surface: little knew he of the true nature of the world he lived in, little of the movement of the currents on which he floated: he applauds his hero for cunning and dexterity: he sneers at the blunt blundering of the broad-shouldered English, or the fatal obstinacy of his first master Charles the Bold: but he knows not to what ends that shifty nature of Louis XI is working, nor does he see that in the Burgundian wreck the old feudal world is going down: he is unconscious of those problems of national life and human liberty which, as he writes, are already upheaving the bosom of society. His reflexions, naïve and trite, show no sign that he and those whose story he tells were conscious of standing on the brink of great discoveries, of new worlds in art and science, of fresh-wakening powers of man, of bold and revolutionary speculations in theology. One step forward, and the traveller would have come in sight of the broad ocean of a new life spread out before him and leading to unknown horizons and lands of promise out of view; but Commines never takes that step; he tarries on the threshold, amusing himself with his odd moralisings, and busied with his low-toned ambitions; he knows not that even in the very moment at which he writes the world is moving swiftly from Renaissance to Reformation, from feudal misrule to compacted national life.

The latter half of the fifteenth century is in some respects less important in France than elsewhere. She was on the whole behind her neighbours at this time. The long-drawn troubles of the Hundred Years' War, and the utter prostration of her energies, the total want of humanity in her nobles, the absence of a true middle-class among her people, the backwardness of her trade, the ruin of her agriculture:—all these things had combined to leave France ignorant and careless, and even to unfit her for the reception of fresh influences from without. The troubles of the reign of Louis XI, which kept the land in constant agitation, also checked its development; and unfortunately, when better days came, the French Court drew its inspirations from Italy, under the unwholesome guiding of the

Medici, while the French nobles listened to the voices of Zurich or Geneva without abandoning their vices and pride, and the people stood by, uninterested spectators of movements in art, politics, and religion, which seemed to have no bearing whatever on their own lives and fortunes. This however was at a somewhat later period: at the time we now deal with, France has only one problem to work at;—like England, Florence, Rome, or Spain, she is in the throes of a transition from feudalism to monarchy. To carry through this change was the work of Louis XI: to have subdued the later development of the feudal spirit, as it showed itself in the great princes near the throne, and at the same time to have destroyed the germs of constitutional life:—these are the great acts of the subtle king; these the doubtful titles on which he claims high place among the founders and organisers of the kingdom of France.

And, after all, Louis does but carry out a movement already going on. His share in it was this;—at the beginning of his reign he evoked by his impatient spirit the latent hostility around him, and then by unwearied and diligent duplicity, and by help of marvellous good fortune, got the better of all the forces arrayed against him, and defended, secured, and aggrandised his often-tottering throne. A century earlier the fall of Étienne Marcel at Paris, and the extinction with him of all hope of any true burgher-life in France, had been a marked indication of what was coming; for it proved that one main and essential element of constitutional life was absent. Then, all hope of parliamentary government fled from France when English Henry V expired. That great prince, feeling that his own rights and title in England depended on Parliament, steadily encouraged similar institutions in his second kingdom of France; and had he lived to carry out his far-seeing plans, the constitutional history of France might have had some annals of its own. But he died, and in his grave lay buried the last hopes of such a growth. There came, instead, the unpatriotic and selfish reigns of Charles VII and Louis XI[1]: it may in fact be said that the

[1] See Ranke, History of England, i. p. 85 (Engl. Transl.)

latter reign was decisive for France; for it destroyed all hope of constitutional government. The institutions of the Germanic world,—whether displayed in the noble and long-lived Republics of Switzerland; or in the attempts at organisation then visible in Germany herself; or in the struggles of the great Flemish towns; or in the slowly-growing popular liberties of England,—had no effect on the constitutional history of France: Germanic feudalism succumbed there before the Celtic love of brilliancy and absolute rule. France becomes a great nation; her place in Europe, as it grows more defined, grows more commanding and more absolutist. It will be the main object of these volumes to trace the development of royal France till it reaches its highest point in the glories of the Great Monarch.

The reigns of Charles and Louis, the elevation of the Armagnac faction to be the national party[1], and the ejection from France of the Burgundians, the marvels of the career of the Maid of Orleans, and after her death her acceptance as a popular saint and heroine;—all these things taught the French to regard themselves as one nation, headed by one king, and looking to one centre.

A chief instrument in this movement was the standing army which Charles VII introduced[2] and which Louis XI, doubtless in imitation of Italian usage, developed still further, by substituting for his father's gens d'ordonnance, who were a kind of national militia, a horde of foreign mercenaries. A standing army may possibly be compatible with domestic liberties, nay, it may even become a centre of national life; but a king surrounded by mercenaries is, in germ at least, a despot.

In the period before us we shall trace this tendency towards absolutism as it gains strength at every step; at the outset, the Burgundian power strives against it: the whole career of Louis XI secures its victory.

And yet the subtle monarch, 'the universal spider,' as

[1] See vol. i. pp. 495, 512.

[2] See vol. i. pp. 545, 548, 549.

Chastellain[1] calls him, seemed scarcely conscious of the task of his life; he certainly felt little security in his later days, when the struggle was over and none ventured to lift the hand against him; he had little enjoyment of his absolute power in the dismal prison-house he made for himself at Plessis-lez-Tours. But in the world it is often so: movements, tendencies, general changes, pass over the whole face of society; men most different in character, under circumstances most varied, set themselves, often unconsciously, to work out the self-same problem, and to conduct mankind through the same crisis. This century feels the birth-throes of national life, and of absolute monarchy: in the next age we may watch the great wave of fresh and free thought, reforming all Europe in dogma and manners: in the eighteenth century, 'the age of philosophic princes,' comes the emergence of humane and philanthropic ideas, and the strange combination of absolute power with levelling theories: all three ages are clearly marked off, each with its own set of phenomena. In all these periods the chief personages are often far from being heroic: few see the bearings of their own acts and lives. But nowhere are the great so small as in the fifteenth century in France: nowhere are really grand results achieved with so little grandeur of soul. It is the age of a revived Reynard the Fox: its history is the history of his hypocrisy, intrigues, cruelties, and ultimate triumph. In this period we can study the earliest stages of that 'European System,' as it has been called, which, beginning with the first consciousness of independent national life, threw off on the one hand the old allegiance paid to Pope and Emperor, and on the other hand developed itself into that international combination which we call 'the Balance of Power.'

Two questions, which now come forward in Europe, give us the clue to this movement: for these questions deeply interest the nations and call out their powers of diplomacy and intrigue. The first is that life-and-death question, Who shall be the bulwark of Christendom against the Turk? From Constantinople

[1] 'Ay combattu (says the Flemish Lion) *l'universal Eraigne*.' G. Chastellain, Buchon, Tom. XLI. p. xvii.

he had pressed on westwards: the voice of the Church, the piercing cries of Hungary, called all men to go on crusade. But the 'Great Duke of the West,' the Duke of Burgundy, answered with an empty pageant; 'the great King,' as the polite and interested Venetians called the King of France, haggled over his interests in Southern Italy; while Hungary, to stem the tide of invasion, bravely sacrificed her national life, a very martyr in the cause of European freedom; and the heart-stricken Pontiff, Pius II, redeemed a false and worldly life by one great effort, of which he could not survive the failure.

The other international question was this:—To whom shall Italy, the fair and frail, belong? Shall Spain, or France, or Germany be her lord? or shall she be divided among the nations, in proportion to their strength and boldness? There is no more interesting, no more fruitful question in the annals of Europe than this of the struggle for Italy, and of the influence exerted in return by her on other nations. Southern Germany, Spain, France, all felt it and were modified by it. We shall have an opportunity of tracing out some portion of this influence when we come to treat of the later princes of the House of Valois and of the Medicean dominance at the Court of France.

CHAPTER I.

The Later Years of Charles VII.
A.D. 1453–1461.

When, in the year 1453, the battle of Castillon[1] at last closed the English wars, Charles VII had already sat for thirty-one years on the throne of France. Indolent and indifferent, without a single noble aim, coldly ungrateful to his best friends, he is a prince who seems never to come out of the obscurity of his earlier days: he shuns the light: buried in some distant castle, he follows his negative career, almost unknown, almost forgotten; for though he was incapable of good, he was not an oppressor, nor did he ruin his country by war. His throne, thanks to those who had served him so well, seemed to be thoroughly established; no jealousies show themselves; the fires of the old Praguerie are quenched: although he is surrounded by citizen financiers, soldiers, ladies, all more or less opposed to the old nobility, still the great lords are quiet, and for the remainder of his reign offer him no molestation. In fact, the indolent king was shrewder than he seemed: though surrounded and led by favourites, like English Charles II, he also resembled that monarch in understanding them, nor was he ever duped by them: he had a great gift of being able to make others do him good service; and if he seemed to leave things to work themselves out as they would, he was but following the policy of his grandfather, Charles V of France, who successfully 'cunctando restituit rem,' and was victor through inaction.

In his days the land breathed again; after long sickness, there

[1] See vol. i. p. 552.

came a time of quiet lassitude, followed by slow and gentle recovery; the bountiful soil once more bore in plenty; the thrifty labourer returned to his accustomed tasks. The unadventurous spirit of the King was a bulwark and safeguard to his country. Hungarians told him that 'they were the wall and France the house'; that the Turk was battering down the wall, and would soon enter in to spoil the house; but the King thought the peril still far off, and did not care to move. Courtly Venetians, already forecasting their relation with France, said that they waited till he, 'the great king of the west,' should move: he cared nothing for their flattery, and stirred never a step. The Pope himself stretched out imploring hands: all was in vain; Charles remained untouched, and France escaped the glories, the miseries, the ruin of a new Crusade. A little later, and his captains urged him to make war on the Duke of Burgundy; even this failed, and the many preparations for the struggle came to nothing. Consequently, these years saw a great revival of prosperity in France: taxation was moderate; the King showed a strong wish that there should be justice and quiet in his realm[1]; the people were content, and even grateful. Among the many signs of tranquillity may be noted the settlement of the Scottish body-guard as a village community at S. Martin-d'Aurigny, not far from Bourges.

At this time the Church gave hardly a sign of life in France, and the chroniclers are almost silent on ecclesiastical affairs; the influences of religion had dropped into a dull superstition, and those who seemed most devout often knew least of the true spirit of Christianity. Under the arrangements of the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges[2], the high appointments in the Church were chiefly in lay hands; the great nobles and ecclesiastics were at one, with a common origin and common interests, and mind and morals dulled and cast into a deep sleep. There was little or none of that movement which in England

[1] A long Ordonnance, dated April 1453, attests the real desire of the King to organize and strengthen the administration of justice, and to remedy the evils resulting from the long war.

[2] See vol. i. p. 544.

and Bohemia had already stirred the spirits of men. The ghastly persecution for 'Vauderie,' or so-called Waldensian opinions, which raged in Northern France, and specially at Arras, soon after the middle of the fifteenth century, seems to have had no religious element whatever in it, and certainly soon became a mere proscription of the wealthier citizens for the benefit of some interested and fanatical priests[1]. A few preachers of simple sermons, men of the people, existed to prove that there still smouldered some faint life in the embers of the Church.

A dull scholasticism reigned at Paris: there was no sign of that intellectual eagerness which had already seized on Italy. The movement of the Renaissance just reached the gates of the University of Paris, but had not strength to enter in. In 1458 Gregory of Tiferno came thither to teach Greek and Rhetoric, these being the new learning, as opposed to Latin and Logic, the old; but the earlier tradition was still too strong, and though they let him establish a chair and teach, the results were pitifully small; after a while the Italian gave way before the phalanx of hostile forces, and withdrew to Venice.

The literary annals of France are at this time almost dumb. A slender voice, also of the people, is heard from the Norman dales and woodlands of Vire: the author of the earliest 'Vaudevilles[2],' Olivier Basselin, sang there his lively ditties over the cider-cup, and gave birth to one sparkling form of French poetry. Villon, sometimes styled the first modern French poet, also a man of low birth, belongs to this same period. His poetry has a ring of sadness in it: the age has not yet shaken off the fear of death; its shadow is on his verse. He walks in the Cemetery of the Innocents: he sees the skulls that have

[1] See Du Clercq, Mémoires, bk. iv. c. 3, sqq. (Buchon, Tom. XXXIX. pp. 8, sqq.) The date is 1459. It is interesting to note that the charges brought against the poor creatures were exactly those which had before been brought against the Templars; with equal injustice in either case.

[2] 'Vaudeville' is a corruption of 'Vau-de-Vire,' i.e. Val de Vire, these songs having been sung or recited in the valleys under Vire. M. Géruzez (Hist. de la littérature, I. 209, ed. 1876) attributes the oldest Vaudevilles to Basselin, and holds that J. le Houx did but retouch and reissue them.

been dug up all heaped pell-mell together: 'the lords have lost their lordships: no man is there styled clerk or master.' Death has levelled all. Nor can we altogether forget the career of Alain Chartier, 'father of French eloquence,' as he is called (as if that quality had not characterised the race from the beginning!), the mean-looking poet, whose lips were touched by sweet Queen Margaret of Scotland, for the sake of the golden words that had issued thence. And lastly, there is the 'good King René,' endowed with every gift of mind and every noble virtue, the first French prince on whom fell the inspiration of the Renaissance, poet, painter, musician, the practical man who developed the prosperity of his Provençal domains; a king, brother of kings, father of kings, he stands alone in this age, combining the culture of Provence with the fresh life of Italy; his marriage connects him with the courts of France and England; his political tendencies and personal sympathies tempt him to bequeath his splendid heritage, stretching from Lorraine to Marseilles, to the Duke of Burgundy. Strange as it may seem to those who only know of Charles the Bold as the obstinate and furious prince of Granson, Morat and Nancy, the Burgundian duke is the only personage of the time who can be compared with René for virtue, learning, or skill in art.

The historians whom it will be our task to follow, for the main part belong to a somewhat later time than this which now engages our attention[1].

The state of the noblesse calls for more notice. Discredited and in large part destroyed by the English wars, most of the older feudal houses had sunk into impotence, and in their place had come up a group of great lords, chiefly kinsfolk of the king, 'princes of the lilies.' In the Praguerie[2] hardly any names had been prominent, except those of the princes of the

[1] Philip of Commines wrote his great work late in this century and early in the next; the Chronique Scandaleuse goes down to 1483; the confused and wearisome Memoirs of Olivier de la Marche could not have been much earlier; the short and jejune work of Jacques du Clercq was perhaps written as early as 1470.

[2] See vol. i. pp. 545, 546.

blood-royal, of captains in the late wars, such as Dunois, the 'Bastard of Orleans,' and of discarded favourites, like La Trémoille: the old noblesse had become insignificant. There stand out a few great lords, such as the Duke of Brittany or the Count of S. Pol: but almost all notable persons are royal kinsmen; witness the Dukes of Burgundy, Berry, and Bourbon, who sprang from Saint Louis, or the great House of Anjou. These princes will be the peril of Louis XI; their resistance broken, his work will be done: he will have laid firm foundations for absolute sovereignty. Their prominence, compared with the smallness of other feudal barons, the older noblesse, is in itself a revolution: it shows that the day of feudal supremacy is over, its forces spent, and that in its place has sprung up a new nobility, allied to the crown by birth, and claiming an almost royal standing. The fate of the Count of S. Pol, Constable of France, a last representative of the older noblesse, forms an epitome of the fortunes of feudalism in this age. Long poised between France and Burgundy, he lost at last his balance, and perished in the hopeless attempt to maintain a feudal independence in the presence of royalty. He offers also an example of one of the earliest endeavours to establish a kind of Balance of Power, in which the smaller states should be preserved by the antagonism of the greater: but it was in vain; the feudal lord, abandoned by both the great princes, fell a victim to his own ambition and to theirs, and perished on the scaffold.

Such being the state of France at home, what were her relations with the world around her? Here there was little to disturb her in the task of gradual recovery, nor much to stimulate her in any endeavour after a patriotic and constitutional life. On the contrary, at home and abroad, all tended equally to force France into the fatal path of absolutism, to which she has owed many glories, triumphs, augments of territory, a grand position among the nations; but to which also she owes many of her difficulties and disasters, and the bewilderments of her later career. That she did not perish under the weight of her terrible monarchy, or under the perils of

reaction from that form of government,—that she has risen once and again, bright and sanguine, clever and light-hearted, is due partly to the vast wealth of her soil, partly to her central and most favourable position on the map of Europe: and chiefly to that high level of natural intelligence which marks her population.

There is extant a curious document, dated A.D. 1454, by the hand of Æneas Sylvius, afterwards Pope Pius II, who, from his shrewdness, power of observation, and personal knowledge of Europe, was of all men then living the best qualified to describe the state of affairs at this epoch. He is discussing in a kind of state-paper the prospects of the projected crusade; and after warm praises of Philip of Burgundy for his readiness in the matter, he goes on to give his reasons for thinking that the proposed Diet at Frankfort must be a failure. For, says he, there is no real unity in Christendom; neither Pope nor Cæsar is duly reverenced or believed in; they are but feigned names or painted effigies—each state has its own king: there is a prince to every house[1]. Italy is disturbed, Genoa being at feud with Aragon; nay worse, Venice has actually a treaty with the Turk. In Spain are many kings, all differing in power, government, aims, and opinions; there is war too there about Granada: France is still uneasily looking across the channel at England, her old foe: and England watches France. The Germans are divided, without coherence: their cities quarrel with their princes; their princes fight among themselves: Luxemburg is a cause of dispute between the King of Bohemia and the Duke of Burgundy. Thus does Æneas sum up the situation of Europe. It is obvious that there is little in her foreign affairs to interfere with the progress of France at home: on the contrary, while her neighbours ruined their prospects in foreign expeditions, as did the House of Anjou in Italy, or the Burgundians in Switzerland,

[1] Æneas Sylvius, Ep. 127, Op. p. 656. 'Nulla reverentia, nulla fides. Tanquam ficta nomina, picta capita sint, ita Papam Imperatoremque respicimus; suum quaeque civitas regem habet. Tot sunt principes quot domus.'

France, wisely avoiding all complications abroad, and following her best policy of inaction, passed unscathed through a time of risk, and secured her national life.

This then was the posture of the monarchy in 1453. France had beaten down the English opposition, and was supreme in Normandy and Guyenne, and down to the Pyrenees. But three great Houses girt her about; each confessing itself more or less bounden to the Crown, and each watching for every opportunity of loosening that bond and of securing its own independence. These were the Houses of Burgundy, Brittany, and Anjou. A fourth borderland may fairly be taken as ranking with these, though its position was different; that is, Dauphiny[1], the proper heritage of the Dauphin of Vienne, but now the half-independent government of the ambitious and restless Dauphin Louis. A glance at the map of France shows how straitly these princes confined the frontiers of the monarchy; and how great its peril, were they to combine and push in on Paris, as they presently did in the war of the League of the Public Weal.

The lands of the Duke of Burgundy which lay nearest the heart of France were held under feudal tenure of the King: but the true relations between King and Duke were not expressed by any act of homage. Since the Peace of Arras[2] (A.D. 1435) the arbitrary border-line between them had lain to the south of the river Somme in Picardy, scarcely more than fifty miles north of Paris; on the south-east the Duke also held the Duchy of Burgundy, the western portions of which were not more than eighty-five miles from the capital[3]. Between the northern and eastern possessions of the Duke lay the lands of René of Anjou, which he had just given over to his eldest son, John, Duke of Calabria; here the frontier was further from Paris. This great House of Anjou also held the Duchy of

[1] See vol. i. p. 422.

[2] See vol. i. p. 542.

[3] French authorities on geography are at variance as to the westernmost part of the Duchy; some saying that it at one time included Sens, others that it did not.

Bar, and the whole of Provence[1]: it was to a great extent the successor of the ancient kingdom of Arles.

Beyond the Duchy of Burgundy southwards the royal power was limited along the Saone, even close to Lyons, by the possessions of the Duke of Savoy, Bresse and Bugey: further south came the triangular province of Dauphiny, with its base on the left bank of the Rhone, below Lyons, and its apex up among the great giants of the Alps. Then came Provence, limiting France to the right bank of the Rhone down to its mouth.

On the west the rugged coasts and hills of Gaelic Brittany still preserved their half-independence, and at the accession of each Duke a dispute arose respecting the homage due to the King; he demanding liege homage, the Duke tendering only simple homage[2]. In either case the Duchy was self-ruling; the relations implied in homage varying according to the strength of the two parties; the 'King's man' often deemed himself fully equal to the King[3].

Such were the conditions of the French monarchy about the

[1] Which had fallen to Charles of Anjou, brother of S. Louis, in 1251.

[2] The difference is this: He who paid Simple Homage [Homagium planum, simplex] took no oath of fidelity to his lord, nor did it involve the closer relation of subjection of a member of the *Pairie*; he was no 'Peer of the Realm,' a state to which, in the fifteenth century, the greater nobles strongly objected. He was not bound to any service either in Court, in Plea, or in Camp. Simple homage was probably tendered with less solemnity and ceremony. But he who paid Liege Homage [Homagium ligium] knelt, ungirt and swordless, before his lord, placing his two hands within those of his lord, in token of full submission, and then in due form made profession of his subjection; after which he received the kiss of peace from his lord, and entered into enjoyment of his lands. He who had thus sworn Liege Homage was bound at all times and in all places to his lord, must follow him in court and camp, and sit in his Parliament. It was a far closer and more onerous relation. See the 'Délibération du conseil du Duc de Bretagne sur son hommage,' in the Abbé Lenglet du Fresnoy's Preface to Commines, Collection universelle des Mémoires, ed. 1785, x. p. 96. 'Le Duc faisant hommage du Duché de Bretagne dira *qu'il ne fait point l'homage-lige*, mais fait son homage à la manière que ses prédécesseurs ont fait . . . et à différence du dit homage de Bretagne, en faisant son homage de la Comté de Montfort et des autres terres qu'il tient en France *fera l'homage-lige* déceint et à genoux.' See also Du Cange, Gloss. med. et inf. Latinitatis, s.v. Homagium ligium.

[3] For the extent of the kingdom, &c., in 1453, see map, vol. i. p. 553.

year 1453, the beginning of the age of Louis XI. That prince, now thirty years old, was in a kind of honourable banishment in Dauphiny, chafing under a sense of distrust and a forced quietude, which suited ill his restless nature: he tried to slake his thirst for innovation by so ruling his province as to make it contrast with the listless condition of the court and government at home. The Dauphin's career had already been somewhat chequered. He was born in 1423, and, when only thirteen, was married to Margaret, daughter of James I of Scotland, a bride of twelve years. She, poor child, graceful and charming, had but a sad history: her lively spirits led her to fanciful and imprudent acts, and there were plenty of persons willing to misconstrue all she did, and to freeze the warm current of her young life. Moreover, says Commines, 'there was no one in all the world she dreaded like my lord the Dauphin,' her husband. It is not clear that any prince of the House of Valois ever loved any one truly; but Louis not only did not inspire love, he aroused dread and aversion, the hatred of men, and the terror of women. So this poor princess, when just twenty-one, gave up the unequal strife. 'Fie,' said she to those who would have cheered her as she lay dying of a broken heart, 'fie on life, talk to me no more of it.'

As a boy, the Dauphin was engaged in most of the active movements of the time: he was at the siege of Montereau; he sat at the Council of Bourges, and saw the birth of that Pragmatic Sanction which he afterwards suspended; in 1438 he pacified Languedoc. In his youth he was intelligent, sensible, and generous with gifts. But in his early manhood there came the fever of ambition and desire of an active life. In 1439, 1440, he was head of the first Praguerie, joining the great lords in their attack on his own father. And when that attempt failed, he made a kind of peace with King Charles VII, and was sent to govern Dauphiny; for the King hoped that he would find there a career sufficient to satisfy his taste for active life. There he seems to have governed wisely at first; he reformed the coinage, the usual sign of good government; he encouraged

commerce, made a good working Parliament or Law Court, and established the University of Valence. He seems also to have tried to curb the power of his nobles by forbidding their cherished custom of private war. He proved himself an active and in some ways a wise administrator, though oppressive, and careless of the rights of others; for his heavy taxation he did not ask the consent of the local estates.

He did not always stay in his province: he helped the King in the second Praguerie, fought for him against the English at Dieppe; helped to reduce the Count of Armagnac in the south. Then came the great Swiss expedition, and the battle of S. Jacques (A.D. 1444), which taught him a lesson he never forgot; it was no doubt uppermost in his mind, when, thirty years later, he watched his great rival, Charles of Burgundy, attacking the mountaineers in their homes.

Charles VII, though he employed the Dauphin in these matters, refused him the much-coveted government of Normandy, and sent him back to Dauphiny. There the people grew restless under his rule; the estates appealed to the King against his arbitrary acts. Charles was inclined to interfere; for Louis had lately offended him by marrying, in defiance of his wishes, Charlotte of Savoy, whose father was the Dauphin's neighbour to the east and north. The Duke's lands lay round a great part of Dauphiny; and the marriage seemed likely to strengthen the hands of Louis against his father. A long negociation followed, with complaints, explanations, assurances; all more or less insincere. The King would not listen to his son's demands; Louis would not place himself in the King's power.

Thus things stood in 1453. The Court charged Louis with disobedience in marrying against his father's will; with disloyalty in surrounding himself with evil counsellors; and with cruelty, as an oppressor of his people. On the other hand, the Dauphin protested that the King's advisers were his bitter foes; and that, so long as they remained at Court, he would not return to fall into their hands. In a word, Louis protested against the very policy he himself afterwards followed: for

Charles VII had created a court of new men, as Louis himself did a few years later: but now the Dauphin wished that the non-feudal courtiers should be removed, and that the soldiers of lower birth, the lawyers, and the ladies, all more or less hostile to the great Houses, should cease to sway the King's counsels.

And which of them was in the right? Had the King been a nobler man, it would be easy to condemn the unfilial Dauphin: had the Dauphin been true and not hasty, we might have readily laid all the blame on the weak King and his selfish counsellors. In truth neither one nor other is free from blame: at any rate there are many excuses for Louis. It was an age of princely suspicion: the murders of the Dukes of Orleans and Burgundy were still remembered well, and had made a deep impression on Louis himself, as we see from the great precautions he took when he met Edward IV of England. He had too a still later example in the fate which befell Giles of Brittany, who was starved in prison and then strangled, with the King's consent[1]. He had also probably been told that the royal counsellors had advised the King to disinherit him in favour of Charles his younger brother.

No wonder then that neither the King of Aragon nor the Pope himself could stay the quarrel. On the contrary, Charles VII first cut off the allowance hitherto granted to Louis; and then in 1456 marched with an army into Auvergne, where little but the Rhone lay between him and his son. Antony of Chabannes[2], Count of Dammartin, now the Dauphin's bitterest enemy, soon to be his staunchest friend, was sent forward to occupy Dauphiny in force. The nobles of the province joined the royal army at once.

What was the Dauphin to do? At one time he had seemed minded to resist; but that was hopeless; the Duke of Savoy made terms with King Charles, his nobles deserted him, and the burden of taxation had vexed and alienated his people. Should

[1] This in 1449. Barante, Ducs de Bourgogne, viii. p. 113 (ed. 1825).

[2] The Chabannes' family was from the Bourbon district, and springing from the Counts of Angoulême was allied to the blood-royal.

he submit to his father? That involved the dismissal of his advisers, and his own return to Court: this would hand him over to his foes, and from this he shrank. There was but one course left—that of flight; and this he followed. He appointed a great hunting-party in one direction, and then, distrusting his own officers and friends, rode off the opposite way with but five or six companions [1].

He made for the north: through Dauphiny to the Rhone, through Bugey and Valromey, and so on to Franche Comté, which held of the Duke of Burgundy. Not till he reached Saint Claude, a little town just across the frontier, did he draw rein: there he wrote two letters; the one to his father, excusing his flight with a most transparent pretext; 'my uncle of Burgundy,' said he, 'is going to fight the Turk, in behalf of the Catholic Faith; and I would gladly go too, were it your good pleasure, for the Pope summons me, seeing I am Gonfaloniere of the Church [2].' The second letter was addressed to the French bishops, announcing his intention of going on crusade, and begging their prayers. He had no more thought of going on crusade than had any other prince of the time.

Leaving Saint Claude he passed through Franche Comté, Lorraine, the Bishoprics, Luxemburg, and came to Namur, thence to Louvain, finally to Brussels. There he was kindly received by the Duchess of Burgundy and her daughter-in-law, the Countess of Charolais; the Duke on his return, and with him Charles of Charolais [3] his son, repeated the welcome, providing the penniless prince with a home and a pension. Then Louis settled down quietly at Geneppe, amusing himself with some hunting, some lively and not fastidious society [4], and a little reading and study. Here he was joined by his spouse Charlotte

[1] 'Luy sixième ou septième,' Du Clercq, bk. iii. c. xxii. (Buchon, XXXVIII. p. 191).

[2] Letter (dated August 31, 1456) in Barante, Ducs de Bourgogne, viii. p. 117 (ed. 1825); Duclos, Œuvres, iv; Louis XI, Recueil de Pièces, p. 125.

[3] Afterwards Charles the Bold.

[4] The book entitled 'des Cent nouvelles nouvelles' was a collection of the loose tales told at the Dauphin's table.

of Savoy, who was so poor that 'she had but one wretched and torn dress' to wear. They lived at Geneppe five years; the Dauphin, with wonderful patience, quietly biding his time: he was humble, almost servile, to the Duke, while he kept his hand in by secretly intriguing with the Croys, the Duke's favourites and ministers. Charles VII, who did not lack sagacity, once remarked that 'as for my cousin of Burgundy, he harbours a fox that will one day eat up his chickens[1].'

His presence in Flanders had baleful influences; divisions sprang up in the Burgundian Court. Duke Philip was growing infirm, and leant on the Croys, whom the Count of Charolais and most of the nobles hated accordingly. There appear henceforth two parties at the Duke's Court; that of the reigning Duke, to which Louis attached himself; and that of the heir, Charles of Charolais, who was supported by the nobles and chief towns of Flanders, according to the saying that 'the men of Ghent love never their Duke, but ever their Duke's son.' A decided coolness sprang up between the heir of Burgundy and the heir of France: their interests, their tastes and personal characters, were all opposed. What had they in common? The lofty character of the Count of Charolais could not condescend to the vulgarity which marked the Dauphin's little Court. The Count's tastes were pure; he loved letters and art; his morals were blameless, almost austere: what pleasure could he find in the intrigues and coarse life which were in favour there? Consequently, though thrown together, they were in fact ever apart; and the position of the Dauphin was difficult and precarious. What if the old Duke died? What help could he then expect from Charolais? Would he not hand him over to Charles VII, glad to be clear of him, glad to gratify his powerful neighbour? This doubtless led Louis to try to persuade the old Duke to make an expedition against France, in order to drive away those who surrounded the King with evil counsels, and to put an end to the predominance of such men as Dunois, Dammartin, or René of Anjou,

[1] Michelet, Hist. de France, liv. xii. civ. (vol. v. p. 388).

who were hostile to the Dauphin, and desired to draw Charles VII into a war with Burgundy. But the Duke refused, and Louis was fain to amuse himself as he could in his retreat at Geneppe.

Meanwhile, the King had occupied Dauphiny; the Estates of that province submitted; in 1457 it was fully and finally annexed to the Crown of France. This, and the condemnation of the Duke of Alençon and the Count of Armagnac, are the only incidents worthy to be recorded as taking place in these years within the borders of France.

Though there was, no doubt, great irritation between France and Burgundy, it never came to an open rupture. The King was annoyed to see his rebellious son sheltered in Flanders, and there intriguing against him; the royal captains longed for war with the Duke, and many preparations were actually made. The Burgundian envoys were ill-received, when they came to appease the King's wrath: it was rumoured that Charles had determined to join with the King of England, the Emperor, the Swiss, with the Count of Charolais himself,—in a word, with all the foes of the House of Burgundy[1], and, after overthrowing the Duke in one great joint-effort, to partition out his vast domains among the confederates.

But, just as the Duke had refused to move, when Louis had urged him, so the King, when it came to the point, shrank from the step; and war never broke out. His mind revolted from the thought of helping the son against the father[2].

The air was full of threats of war and projects of expeditions which came to naught. This is the time of the vehement attempt of Æneas Sylvius, now Pius II, to hurl Western Europe against the infidel. Now it was that the Pope let Philip of Burgundy know that if he would but go and take Jerusalem,

[1] Even the Count of S. Pol, that mischievous intermediate between France and Burgundy, appeared at the Court of Charles VII to offer his sword and the help of Charles of Charolais against his father the Duke.

[2] 'For two such realms as mine,' he said, 'I would not consent to such a villain deed.' Duclos, Hist. de Louis XI, Preuves, iv. p. 209.

he should be King thereof[1]. A little later (A.D. 1462) Pius dangled before the Duke's eyes the 'royal investiture[2],' promised him by the Emperor: in which we have the germ of that ambition which is said to have moved Charles the Bold to aim at welding his widespread lands into a monarchy, and which probably formed the main subject of discussion at the Conference of Trèves, so abortive and humiliating to the Duke[3].

It was a time of much profession and little fulfilment. The enthusiasm of the Duke of Burgundy evaporated in splendid festivals and banquets; the ambition of René of Anjou turned aside after Italy, and was quenched in the revolt of Genoa and loss of his hold on the crown of Naples. As to the quarrel between Charles VII and his son, the case was the same: there were embassies and speeches of amazing length and erudition, offers and proposals; a son had been born to the Dauphin, and the King seemed sincerely to desire a reconciliation, and to wish for the presence of Louis at his Court during his declining years. But nothing could overcome the suspicions of the Dauphin; he had little sense of filial duty, nor any affection for his father. Then finally the disappointed King gave ear to his courtiers, who, thinking to prejudice him still more against his son, persuaded him that his life was in danger of poison. But they overreached themselves. The madness which, like an ominous spectre, dogged the footsteps of the House of Valois, now descended on the troubled King: he believed that the Dauphin's plots were woven like a web around him, imagined his food to be poisoned, refused to eat or drink. Ungrateful himself to his best friends, he was destined to perish through fear of his son's undutiful conduct. In vain did the frightened courtiers try to force him to take food; it was too late, he

[1] Æn. Sylv. Op. p. 849 (A.D. 1459).

[2] 'Ceterum ex ipsis Imperatoris literis laeto animo accepimus eum decrevisse, nostra praesertim contemplatione, concedere tibi *regalem investituram*, super quo in tui favorem saepius ad celsitudinem tuam scripsisse meminimus.' Æn. Sylv. Op. p. 855.

[3] Or does the tale of the ambition of Charles the Bold to be a king spring from a misreading of these passages?

lingered a few days and died at Mehun on the Yèvre[1], on the 22nd of July, 1461.

He had been, on the whole, a fortunate prince, and his reign had saved France from many evils.

His counsellors, when they saw that his state was desperate, wrote to deprecate the Dauphin's wrath. Some whispered that it would be well to crown Charles[2], the King's second son; but none ventured to propose it openly: they could only sit still, and shiver at their peril[3]. All France regretted and lamented the 'well-served' prince, and looked forward with dread to the future: the captains and counsellors believed that their day was over. The Count of Dunois, standing by the grave of his master, closed the ceremony with these significant words, 'The King our Master is dead: let each of us look out for himself[4].'

[1] Not far from Bourges. Charles, says Jean de Troye, Coll. des Mémoires (1786), xiii. p. 13, was 'un moult sage et vaillant seigneur, et qui laissa son royaume bien uny et en bonne justice et tranquillité.'

[2] Louis created him Duke of Berry in Nov. 1461.

[3] The letter of Gaston de Foix to Louis XI proves that during the King's last illness, and even before, there had been much movement and anxiety on the part of the counsellors. See Commines, ed. 1785; Preuves de la Préface, i. p. 180.

[4] 'Le Roy nostre Maistre est mort; que chascun songe à se pourvoir.'

CHAPTER II.

The Reign of Louis XI. First Period, A.D. 1461–1467.

I. *The Character of the King.*

Little did the Dauphin Louis mourn when he heard that his father was dead and that he was king. He set off at once for Rheims, sending a messenger to pray Duke Philip to ride with him; for he was not sure with what temper France would receive him, and thought that the countenance of the Duke of Burgundy might be helpful. Soon, however, he saw that there was no risk: all France flocked over the frontier to greet him; the captains of the King's soldiers surrounded his person with a loyal army. In vain he earnestly besought the Duke to bring but a small following; for the lords of Burgundy and the Netherlands had answered the summons in great numbers, each man hoping for some share of the gifts and benefits which they fondly thought would mark the new reign.

Louis passed through Maubeuge, and joined the Duke at Avesnes, where a grand funeral service was held in the morning for the late King, and in the afternoon Louis hunted gaily, in a royal dress of violet colour[1], having had little or no mourning for his father in his heart. The consecration at Rheims followed immediately; many were there knighted; the Duke of Burgundy and others did homage for the lands they held under the Crown[2].

This new king, whom all dreaded and hastened to obey,

[1] The king, French-fashion, wore no black, except at the funeral service. Barante, Ducs de Bourgogne, viii. p. 278.

[2] See above, p. 15, for liege-homage; and below, p. 58, for the French possessions of the Duke of Burgundy.

who, like all men of mark, grew and changed as he went on, was now just thirty-eight years old: he reigned two-and-twenty years. It is not easy to treat him fairly: for the picture drawn of him by his great admirer Commines inspires us with disgust. He is one of the men whose qualities are developed by the circumstances in which they find themselves; his good and evil elements of character both served his country well, so far as it was well to build her up on the foundation of kingly autocracy. If he watched over his country, he also oppressed her: if he infused into her the unity needful for the coming ages, he did it at the cost of her independent institutions, and of her chances of a wholesome national life.

In his history of Henry VII, Bacon, summing up the character of that great prince, places him side by side with Ferdinand the Catholic and Louis XI, styling them the 'tres Magi of Kings of those ages[1].' And certainly, though Henry VII far surpasses the others, they may all three be accepted as the wise men of statecraft, the great upbuilders of royalty. In their power of striking fear into men; in their policy of depressing their chief nobles; in their coldness and indifference as to the means used to compass their ends, these princes are closely allied in character. They were the genuine expression of their age and true leaders of it; they give us the measure of its faults and tendencies; above all, they are the three master-minds which built the framework of modern society.

The age, with its unscrupulous falseness and intrigue, may almost be styled the age of Macchiavelli: for he it was who knew best how to analyse and lay out in the sight of men the principles which governed it. But we should remember that more than a quarter of a century before the grave and patriotic Florentine set himself to that merciless dissection which we find in his 'Prince,' Louis XI had steadily and successfully practised many of the arts which have so unjustly been called by Macchiavelli's name. The best parallel to Louis XI, and

[1] Francis Lord Verulam's History of Henry VII (Ellis and Spedding), vi. p. 244.

one too of his own day, may be found in the career of that cultured and subtle Pontiff, the false and ambitious Æneas Sylvius[1], who almost atoned for a mean, selfish, and vicious youth and manhood, by the devotion of his last days to the hopeless task of arraying Christendom against the Turk. And yet even Pius II gives us no true parallel: he spent no quarter of a century consolidating a great tyranny; his life was almost over when he reached the high goal of his ambition, and the few years left to him as a Pope were very unlike the gloomy record of the later days of Louis. For the French King was, in truth, a man without a parallel: we see him best perhaps by contrasts, as with heavy good-looking Edward IV of England, or with the old Duke Philip, or with Charles of Charolais. By the side of those tall forms we see the mean-looking little King, who bore in his person plain marks of that decrepitude which characterised so many of his race. For the Valois princes were most of them bad, and half of them mad. As their melancholy line moves slowly down the page of history, we can trace the same timid cunning, feeble self-indulgence, coldness, cruelty often, idiotcy sometimes and sometimes madness, a diseased frame, and a wretched constitution. Philip of Valois heads the line, hasty, unwise, cruel, and vicious; then follows John 'the Good,' the silly prodigal, who found his captivity in England so much more amusing than his duties of kingship in France; then came Charles V, the 'Wise,' a great King, cold and mysterious; in him the physical weakness of the race comes out; he was cowardly and diseased. Next comes the handsome, self-indulgent Charles VI; on him madness, the ultimate curse of the family, soon fell, obscuring all the hopes of his young life; his son, Charles VII, the lazy heartless prince, whose most marked quality is ingratitude, follows next, and follows to the same end, for he too dies mad: and now Louis XI stands before us, with every feature and every characteristic of the hereditary type. He combined all the qualities of his fathers, and not without suspicion, in his last days, of insanity.

[1] Pope, under the name of Pius II (Pius Æneas), from 1458 to 1464.

Each of these qualities in him is very clearly marked, as befits the character of a strong man. There is something fascinating in the contrast between his mean appearance and the vast results of his reign; and between the splendour of the older feudalism, now so brilliant and so powerless, and the shabby dress[1] and deprecatory manners of this first of modern kings: by poorness of garb and lowliness in speech—the two outsides of a man—he carefully hid from sight his schemes and dark designs.

His portraits give him a small and cunning eye, a long, aquiline nose[2], a cruel, cynical mouth; his hair falls on his shoulders. The shape of his head is hidden under that 'bad hat' of which Commines speaks; his dress gives him a common look, which is misleading, and was meant to be so. That cynical mouth could at pleasure wear a very winning smile, of which few resisted the fascination. What could be more amusing than the contrast between Louis and burly Edward IV of England, when they met on either side of the grating at Pecquigny Bridge?—the Englishman splendid, handsome and tall, but coarse, self-indulgent, stupid, and straightforward; the Frenchman so meagre and common in appearance, quite conscious of the contrast, and full of contempt for a prince who had so little subtlety and was so easily deceived[3].

No coarse vices are charged against Louis: his physical weakness disinclined him from all excess or open violence; no one ever saw in him any of the faults of a genial character. Hence Commines declares that he 'had never known a prince

[1] When he met the King of Castile at Fontarabia, the year after his accession, Commines tells us 'se habilloit fort court, et si mal que pis ne povoit, et assez mauvais drap aucunesfois; et portoit ung mauvais chappeau, different des aultres, et ung imaige de plomb dessus.' Commines, II. viii. (vol. i. p. 166, ed. Dupont). The references in Commines to volume and page will be from Mdlle. Dupont's edition, unless otherwise stated.

[2] In the Preuves of Mdlle. Dupont's edition of Commines (iii. p. 339) there is a curious instruction respecting the statue of the King to be set on his tomb at Cléry. In it the sculptor is bidden to make 'le netz longuet et ung petit hault, comme savez . . . le netz aquilon.'

[3] Commines, IV. ix. (i. p. 368), 'Les Anglois ne sont pas si subtilz en traictez et en appoinctemens comme sont les François': and again, IV. vi. (i. p. 344), '. . . alloient plus grossement en besongne; parquoy ne peurent si tost entendre les dissimulations.'

of fewer vices,' and that 'God had made him more sage, liberal, and virtuous, than the princes that reigned with him and in his time[1].' He was liberal, no doubt, in a certain sense: he would say it was 'better to have debtors than creditors'—parodying, perhaps unconsciously, in words and in a very different spirit, the rule laid down by our Lord. He cared little for money, except as a means wherewith to buy power, or to corrupt men: but his liberality had no true ring in it; it was only calculating self-interest. Men were his tools; he gave, not because he loved, but because it was the price for help. One cannot see that he ever cared for any man. He took his servants, used them, and threw them aside: even Commines himself was not always secure in favour. For he had no heart: what men call ingratitude was but the bent of his nature; all had a price; he paid, and used them, as he felt he had a right to use his property: he was kinder to his menagerie than to his men. It was the same in his home-life: he was 'a bad son, bad husband, bad father, unjust brother'; he was 'ill to his friend, waur to his foe[2],' according to the old Scottish saying.

Such a man will be vindictive; and the desire of revenge was so strong in Louis that it impelled him to acts which imperilled his safety; the war of the Public Weal sprang in part out of his haste to smite down his father's ministers.

For in his earlier life he was hasty and impatient; stupid people annoyed him. Consequently, he showed a heat and a lack of prudence which contrast strangely with the cold subtlety and foresight of his later days. He could not bear to be kept waiting: he was rash and sudden in talking of people or to

[1] Commines, Prologue (i. p. 3).

[2] Under an old French engraved portrait of the King, in the Hope Collection, Oxford, there is the following inscription, showing the popular view as to his character:—

'Louis renversa tout pour suivre son caprice;
Mauvais fils, mauvais père, infidelle mary,
Frère injuste, ingrat Maistre et dangereux amy.
Il regna sans conseil, sans pitié, sans patrie:
La fraude fut son jeu, sa vertu l'artifice,
Et le Prevost Tristran son plus grand Favory.'

them: twice he told the Archbishop of Rheims to 'get on,' while he was congratulating him in a learned and bottomless speech on his accession[1]. The King was aware of this fault: 'My tongue,' he said, 'has done me great harm, and I know it[2].' To this hastiness were due, in large part, the blunders in the first years of his reign; hence came the great mishap of Péronne. Later on, his impatience turned to an unwearied industry in government and administration: and he cured himself of the fault by bitter experience; 'no man ever learnt more from adversity.' We see the remains of this restlessness in the many journeys he made from end to end of his realm; an activity which continued to the very close of his life, and indeed long after his strength had failed him. On the other hand, this heat and haste were compatible, in his case, with a singular coldness and hardness of disposition: his most congenial friends were the Provost or hangman, Tristran L'Hermite, and Olivier le Daim; by help of these men he rid himself of all who were dangerous to his authority; the executions took place mostly without form or pretence of legal trial. The darker side of his character appears in his conduct towards his first wife, who feared him mortally: she was a 'pretty little lady, who loved reading and books, with which she diverted herself in the great constraint in which her husband kept her; for he held her so close that she scarce dared speak except to two or three servants; she did not venture to leave Amboise, where she was kept in a real captivity;—hence she grew more and more timid and sad, till at last she could not even speak plain:—good was she and simple[3].' The King casts a cold and gloomy shadow over life: wherever he comes, a cruel winter seems to kill the flowers.

[1] This archbishop was J. Juvenal des Ursins, who had gone to Avesnes to meet and salute his King: a sad fate for his copious eloquence!

[2] Commines, I. x. (i. p. 84).

[3] Ibid. Pref. to ed. 1785, p. 159. It is hard to say whether he was more hated or feared. For men's fears see a specimen in Chastellain (quoted in Commines, Preuves de la Préface, ed. 1785, i. p. 280, 281): 'le sieur de Cressol en trembloit de peur, car il cognoissoit son maistre . . . la Reyne à peine qu'elle ne ploroit de peur, tant frémissoit-elle de trespasser de commandement du Roy.'

This is perhaps the worst side of his character, and his meanest quality; but the most marked and prominent one was his falseness. As was said long after of that able statesman the Abbé Dubois that 'he exhaled falsehood from every pore,' so it may be said of Louis that there runs through his life a steady contempt for truth. He lived in an air of deceit and distrust; every one cheated him who could, and all intrigued; his weakness, by the side of the great foes arrayed against him, seemed to have no arms but treachery and fraud. He made agreements and broke them; he held that what he signed under coercion of his enemies was binding only so long as the compelling power could enforce it. Little did his neighbours trust his word, or he theirs. When Charles the Bold carried him to the siege of Liège, we read that he 'bade them say naught to the King[1],' when there was an alarm and the men of Liège were thought to have discomfited the Burgundians; for he knew that he could not rely on him if things went wrong. A little later, on occasion of the great sally of the citizens[2], we are told that they 'knew not in what state the King was, nor on what side he was, which thing caused great anxiety.' And yet he had made a final peace with the Duke scarcely a fortnight before, and had sworn to keep it loyally: 'nevertheless, no confidence was possible[3].' Though he was filled with superstitious terrors, he regarded no oath nor solemnity, save only that he would not perjure himself on the bit of the true cross of S. Lou of Angers; for he was convinced that whoever swore falsely thereon would die within the year:—was it not so with his brother Charles of Guyenne[4]?

Closely akin to this falseness were the King's seductive qualities. He was 'a prince who sought to win men, which is a very great grace that God gives to the prince who knows how

[1] Commines, II. xi. (i. p. 181).
[2] Ibid. II. xii. (i. pp. 191, 192).
[3] 'Toutefois la fiance ne s'y povoit trouver par nulle voye.'
[4] Cp. Commines, IV. vi. (i. p. 341). If ever Louis did swear on it (as in the case of his treaty with the Duke of Brittany in 1476) it may be taken for certain that he meant to keep his word. He refused the Constable S. Pol a safe conduct on it in 1475.

to do it[1].' 'There was never prince who so laid himself out to gain any one who might be either serviceable or harmful to him[2].' On such a man he used all his battery of winning ways, persuasive speech, ample promises, liberal gifts. Nor was he nice as to his instruments; any man who was shrewd, handy at business, not too particular, suited him well. Such was Ambrose of Cambrai, an old friend of the Count of Armagnac, a forger and murderer; Louis made him his Maître des Requêtes, then Chancellor of the University of Paris. Such was Philip of Commines himself, from whose applauding pen come all these traits of character.

In a word, the King's views as to the mainspring of government lie in the apophthegm with which he is said to have replied to those who urged him to give his son Charles a better education, in order that the boy might be a good king in his day: he replied with the words, 'Qui scit dissimulare, scit regnare[3]'— He is a king, who can conceal his thoughts.

We shall not expect to find in Louis either a high sense of honour, or pride, or indeed much self-respect. It was a saying of his that 'when pride rides before, shame and loss follow hard behind'; and Commines, who tells us this, adds that 'from that sin he was quite free[4].' The same temperament led him to think far less than was usually thought in his day of the shame of cowardice. He was naturally timid, 'fearful of his own nature'; yet, on occasions, as in the day of Montlehéri, he could show himself very fearless; and on his death-bed he gave way to no unmanly dread. On the other hand, his alarms were often abject; none might ever breathe to him the hated name of death; he was the slave of his physician; he gathered together all the relics and charms he could hear of; sent for monks and magicians[5], saints and herbalists; he made, for

[1] Commines, I. ix. (i. p. 82). [2] Ibid. (i. p. 83).

[3] A phrase attributed by Æneas Sylvius (Op. 473 c) to the Emperor Sigismund.

[4] Ibid. II. iv. (i. p. 147). 'Quant orgueil chevaulche devant, honte et dommage le suivent de bien près; et de ce peché n'estoit-il point entaché.'

[5] Jean de Troye (ed. 1786), p. 431. 'Y fist aussi venir grand nombre de *bigots, bigottes* et gens de dévotion, comme hermittes et sainctes creatures,

example, the 'Estates of Paris' go in procession to S. Denis to pray that the bitter north-east wind, the Bise, should not blow; for it was a wind that would do much harm to man and to the fruits of earth [1].

And this brings us to that strange element in his nature, his religion. He treated with it, he dealt with it, intrigued with the Virgin and the Saints, as if they had been neighbouring princes. He bribed them, used them, neglected them, as seemed desirable. In his day there was little true sense of religion; and Louis was of a type not yet extinct, a devotee without faith, almost a superstitious atheist. No man was ever more willing to do outward worship, and his superstitions were almost those of an idiot; yet no man ever had less of real and genuine belief in God. There is a curious tale that one day a priest was offering up in his presence a prayer to S. Eutropius 'that he would give the King health in body and soul,' and that Louis interrupted him with the order to omit the words 'and soul'; 'for,' said he, 'it is enough for the saint to give bodily health, without asking him for too many things at once [2].' And again, with all this eager observance, this faith in talismans, this devotion of pilgrimage, he absolutely disregarded, as we have said, the most solemn oaths: he was also singularly free from all dependence on the clergy. They find no place in his counsels; he opposes them, alienates them from him, pays no respect to their position or their ecclesiastical weapons. 'France,' says a Frenchman of our day [3], 'is bound to two influences, superstition and irreligion.' The phrase describes the religious position of Louis XI.

Let us pass to the intellectual character of the man. Here we meet with difficulties; for there are scarcely any data on which to form an opinion. As in his movements we discern an irritable restlessness, so in his mind we can also note a like

pour sans cesse prier Dieu qu'il permist qu'il ne mourust point.' (Is this an early use of the word *bigot* in its modern sense? or only the French form of *beghard*?)

[1] Jean de Troye (ed. 1786), p. 437.

[2] Martin, Hist. des Français, vii. p. 153.

[3] Père Hyacinthe, in one of his addresses at Geneva.

quickness and eagerness. He had been ill-taught, with scarcely any training: he did not seem to see much advantage in education for his son; though perhaps the miserable health of the boy was some excuse. Still, we have little proof that Louis set any store by learning, though he seems to have been fairly friendly with men of letters; he regarded them as a new power which might be useful against the rough vigour of the nobles; perhaps also he discerned that authors would only too willingly lend aid to absolute monarchy, with their skill in panegyric, their power of writing or distorting history, their almost inevitable position of dependence. But there seems little to show that he cared for learning for its own sake. It is true however that he let a printing press be established in the Sorbonne, and that he refused to persecute the new learning for the benefit of the old. It is also certain that his was an inquisitive and active mind: 'no man ever whispered so much into one's ear; none ever asked so many questions, or wished to know so many persons[1].' Of his sagacity there can be no doubt; 'he was the best man that ever was at getting out of a scrape[2].' He knew well what France needed, and showed that he knew it by his conversation on his deathbed, when he lamented that God had not granted him six years longer to give her peace and tranquillity, and to heal her wounds. But the great ruler is not the man who deplores his fate, and sees what might have been done had more opportunity been his; it is the man who seizes what opportunity he has, and shapes it resolutely for his people's good. And this is just where Louis XI failed. He had no constructive power; he could not help a growing nation towards a wholesome and prosperous life. He effected great things, but not in a great manner: what he did achieve shall be considered when we reach the end of his career.

Though he was the instrument of great things for France, Louis XI had but an ignoble spirit: such utterances of his as are preserved to us reveal a cunning rather than a wise nature;

[1] Commines, I. x. (i. p. 84).
[2] Ibid. (i. p. 83), 'pour soy tirer d'ung mauvais pas.'

no dignified tone of mind appears; if he was 'humble in dress and speech' it was because the soul within was mean. His whole being is of one strain; physically feeble, and disposed to take a low view of his own character and of that of others, intellectually thin and unsympathetic, Louis is one of the few men destined to do really great things, and yet not himself to be great.

Such was the prince who was now come to reign over France for twenty-two years. That reign may be divided into three periods: (1) the King's earlier struggles with the great lords, from A.D. 1461 to 1467; (2) the rivalry with Charles the Bold, A.D. 1467 to 1476; (3) the quiet years at the end of the reign, A.D. 1476 to 1483.

II. *The First Years of the Reign*, A.D. 1461–1467.

When the King first came to Paris after his consecration, the Flemish and other lords of the Burgundian escort held high sport and tourney in the street of S. Antoine, hard by the Tournelles where he lodged. After they had shown their skill and appointments to the crowd, there rode into the lists a rough fellow, well-mounted, clad in skins, and equipped with wooden armour: he broke in among the knights, and 'nothing stood before him.' The King, who had arranged it all, watched the discomfiture of his chivalry unseen from a window of his palace, doubtless with a sardonic smile on his pale face. It was a parable of the coming reign; it was the royal power rudely breaking up the old glories of chivalry; the rough hired soldier scattering away the feudal levy.

The King's first act was to get rid of these followers of Duke Philip; he dismissed them with many fair words, and scanty gifts: their doleful faces, as they turned their horses' heads northwards, were a sight to be seen. Then he at once fell on the chief lords of France. The Duke of Bourbon, who had hastened to meet him, the greatest man of the South,

lost his government of Guyenne even before the coronation[1]. The King showed a desire to draw towards the towns and to set them against the princes: the burghers, dazzled by the unwonted attention, thought that a new day was dawning for them[2].

These acts were sufficiently imprudent, but worse was to follow. Louis suddenly deprived of all their offices his father's ministers and friends[3], though the Duke of Burgundy had begged him to give them grace, and he had promised to be gentle with all except eight. 'Such were the Chancellor Juvenal, the Marshal, the Admiral, the First President of the Parliament, the Provost of Paris and divers others[4]': in their places he set new men 'who acquitted themselves but poorly.' Then he took a farther step, as rash but in another direction; for he set free the Duke of Alençon and the Count of Armagnac, whom his father had condemned and imprisoned: and they at once joined the ranks of the malcontents.

Next, he ventured on a line of policy, the grounds of which are plain enough, but which must have aroused great irritation;—he negociated with the Papacy for the abolition of the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges, with the sole stipulation that René of Anjou should receive investiture for the kingdom of Naples from the Pontiff. It is true that these arrangements were not carried out, nor was the Pragmatic Sanction superseded: still, the document was dragged with every mark of contumely, as if it had been an offending saint, through the streets of Rome; and the King offended and alienated both nobles and clergy. For the terms of the agreement of Bourges had secured them a great power in all appointments to episcopal

[1] See the letter of Louis to Saintrailles, Marshal of France, bidding him secure Guyenne, assemble the inhabitants, and send him tidings by 'two of the most notable burghers of the chief towns.' He does not mention Bourbon. The letter is dated Maubeuge, 27 July, 1461. See Commines (ed. 1785), Pref. to vol. i. p. 84.

[2] In Chastellain's vigorous phrase, 'Ses povres subjects cuidoient avoir trouvé Dieu par les pieds.' Chastellain, p. 173.

[3] Commines, I. iii. (i. p. 28).

[4] Jean de Troye, pp. 23, 24.

sees and abbeys; the nomination to these lay in the hands of the feudal lords, and consequently the higher clergy were their kinsfolk, who made common cause with them in resisting an attack on the rights and powers of the nobles. The Parliament of Paris also opposed the attempt to subject the Gallican Church more directly to the Pope and King. The actual partition of the Gallican liberties did not however take place till the days of Francis I. It is during these dealings with the Papacy that we hear of John la Balue, the King's Almoner, Bishop of Evreux and Angers, who conducted the affair, and was made a cardinal in consequence. He was one of the King's most trusted men, and, after the manner of the time, betrayed his master almost to his ruin, as we shall see[1]. The King also showed himself determined to curb the power of the clergy, refusing them entry into his council[2]: it may be noticed that, in return, one of the first meetings of the league against him took place in the church of Notre Dame at Paris[3].

The Duke of Brittany, Francis II, did the homage due from him[4], but only 'as his council understood it': there were also difficulties and reservations on the King's part which left irritation in the Duke's mind. Lastly, the formidable soldier who had taken an active part in ejecting Louis from Dauphiny, Antony of Chabannes Count of Dammartin, was taken and imprisoned.

Having thus kindled a fire, which was not destined long to smoulder before breaking out into flame, the King made a progress, first to a shrine at Redon near Vannes, then through Nantes down to Bordeaux; thence to the very edge of the kingdom in Béarn. He met John of Aragon in lower Navarre, and made a treaty with him, lending him money to carry on his wars at home, and receiving in pawn Roussillon and Cerdagne, together with Perpignan, a strong place, and Collioure (A.D.

[1] See below, pp. 67, 68.
[2] Michelet, Hist. des Français, tom. vi. p. 64.
[3] Olivier de la Marche, c. 35. Ed. 1785, ix. p. 69.
[4] See Commines (ed. 1786), Pref. to vol. i. pp. 95, 96, and above, p. 15.

1463). The King of Aragon used the French King's help to subdue his own foes, and then turned round, intriguing against his friend: it was a lesson in ingratitude which Louis did not fail to study.

On his return he imposed arbitrary taxes: the people awoke out of their dream of confidence: 'in all things,' says Chastellain, who disliked him much, 'he studied to make himself hated, not loved[1].' He set up a rival to the Parliament of Paris at Bordeaux; he gave his feeble brother Charles, a youth already under the influence of his foes, the great Duchy of Berry as an apanage. Charles was not personally formidable: but he was still heir to the throne, and in vigorous hands might become very dangerous.

As if all these risks at home were not enough, the King also embarked on the stormy sea of English politics. In March, 1461, Edward IV had been proclaimed king, and his coronation made the triumph of the Yorkists for the moment complete: in 1462 Margaret of Anjou crossed over to France for aid. That great House of Anjou was ever engaged in many chivalrous and romantic enterprises. Louis, who had befriended René, now took up the cause of the forlorn Queen; a step which embroiled him still more with the House of York; and that House in return encouraged the Dukes of Brittany and Burgundy in their hostility to the French crown.

As yet Louis seemed to be on very good terms with his old benefactor, Philip the Good; and, thanks to his friendship with the Duke's counsellors, the Croys, he persuaded him to accept the amount stipulated in the treaty of Arras as the ransom-money for those towns on the line of the river Somme, which had been the price of the reconciliation between Charles VII and the Duke of Burgundy in 1435. Their repurchase was one chief cause of the outbreak of hostilities; for Charles of Charolais was vehemently opposed to the cession, and did all he

[1] Chastellain, c. cxlix. (Buchon, XLII. p. 8).

could to hinder it. The King however persuaded the Duke at a meeting at Hesdin; and on payment of four hundred thousand crowns of gold the towns were restored to France[1]. Louis could always find money; he took unscrupulously from his people, spent nothing on his own state, and boldly used what he had for political objects, whether these were the subsidising of neighbours, or the purchase of territory, or the corruption of agents. When the King visited the Duke he actually went so far (in his indignation against undutiful sons!) as to offer to chastise the Count of Charolais for rebelling against his father. But old Duke Philip rejected the offer with horror. These Somme towns, which formed a frontier for Flanders far within the French borders, and gave the Duke entry into the heart of the kingdom, were the real aim of Charles of Charolais[2] in the war of the Public Weal, as well as the cause of the war between the King and Duke in 1470; after which time they permanently went with the monarchy.

With this cession of the Picard towns the year 1463 closes. All 1464 the discontent grew; and, as if to secure an outbreak, Louis smote the nobles in their tenderest place, their love of sport and privileges of hunting:—rumours went abroad that he had forbidden hunting in Dauphiny, and was about to sell the forest-rights throughout France. The King was probably moved by a wish to assist agriculture and to relieve his peasantry, on whom the vexations connected with the chase pressed very heavily[3]. He had, however, no time to carry out his wish; for the war was on him. The Count of Charolais had snatched the reins of government from the hands of the old Duke, now too feeble to resist him; the Croys fled for their lives. The Count of S. Pol, whose lands lay between Flanders

[1] They were Peronne, Roye, Montdidier, Abbeville, S. Quentin, Amiens, and some smaller places, all lying on or near the Somme. The history of the lines of barrier-places between France and Flanders is an interesting and varied one.

[2] Charles said later that he would 'give up the best duchy that he had rather than part with these towns.' Chastellain, p. 459.

[3] See Michelet, tom. vi. pp. 80, 81.

and Picardy, kept up the communication between Charolais and the discontented nobles of France. In vain did the King summon his lords to a great assembly at Tours; they came, they heard him, they professed submission and a desire for peace, and then went off to make them ready for war.

They had already formed a great League, a more formidable Praguerie. Its nominal head was the King's brother, Charles of Berry, heir to the throne; with him were the Duke of Brittany, the Count of Armagnac, the Duke of Nemours, John of Anjou Duke of Calabria, the Duke of Bourbon, Dunois the aged Bastard of Orleans, and most of the captains of the later days of the English war. Dammartin escaped from prison and joined them. The real leader was the Count of Charolais; he was also first in the field. Their confederacy was styled 'the League of the Public Weal'; for the nobles professed that they fought to overthrow the King's bad government[1]; it is said that above five hundred princes or lords, as well as some noble ladies[2], were members of it.

The plan of their campaign was simple. The Count of Charolais from the north, the Duke of Brittany from the west, the Duke of Bourbon, helped by the men of the duchy of Burgundy, from the south, and the Duke of Calabria[3], with Lorrainers and some Italians, from the east, were all to converge slowly on Paris and to crush the King in their folds.

And the King's danger was very great. Overwhelming armies, estimated at sixty thousand men, would soon be on him; and he could only reckon on some half-hearted nobles, like the Counts of Maine and Nevers, who served him ill, and were strongly suspected of being in communication with the League; some gens d'ordonnance or soldiers, and his good

[1] Olivier de la Marche, c. 35: 'Se faisoit cette emprise sous ombre du bien publicq, et disoit-on que le Roy gouvernoit mal le royaume et qu'il estoit besoing de la réformer.'

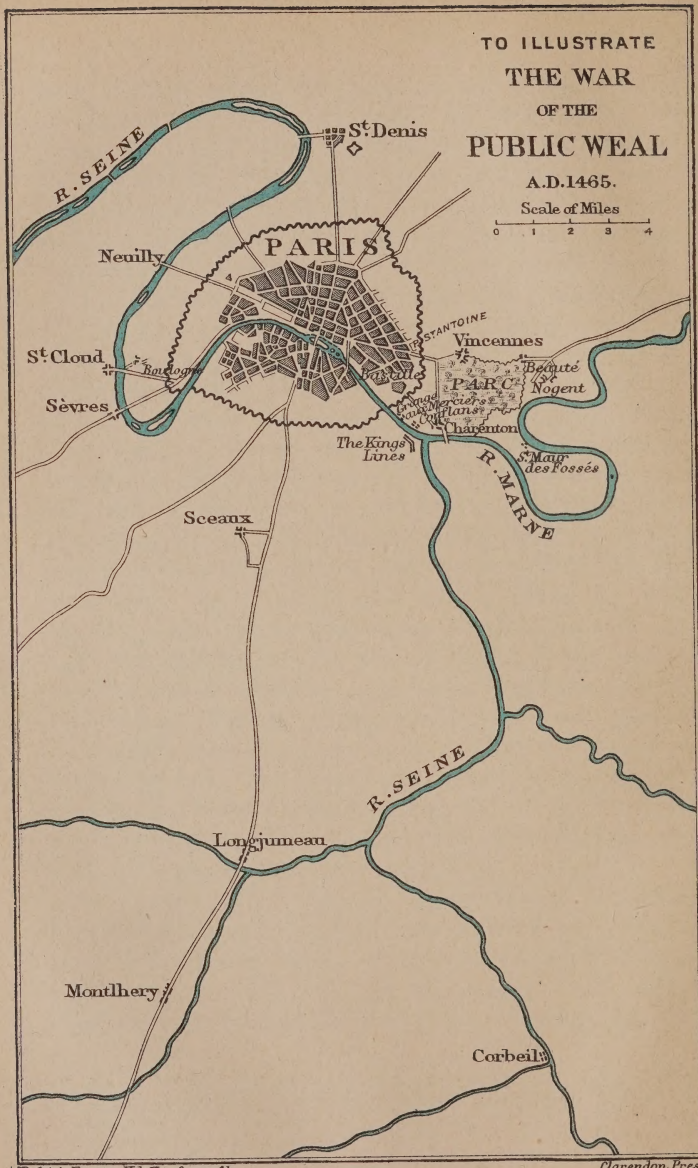
[2] Noble ladies often figure in the aristocratic outbreaks against royalty in France; witness the ladies of the Fronde.

[3] John of Anjou, Duke of Calabria, was son of René of Anjou, King of Sicily. By right of his mother, Isabelle of Lorraine, he was connected with that duchy.

town of Paris, though even there a strong party among the citizens favoured his antagonists. But Louis showed no dismay; he left the Count of Nevers on the Somme frontier line to retard the forward movement of the Count of Charolais, with orders to fall slowly back on Paris: with like instructions the Count of Maine[1], in command of seven or eight hundred men, was sent to hold the Dukes of Brittany and Berry in check as long as possible. The King judged (rightly as it turned out) that the eastern division of his foes would be slow in coming up, and he left the Bastard of Vendôme, one of the few captains who did his work well, to harass the Duke of Calabria's advance: there remained only the southern attack under Bourbon. On this last force Louis fell with admirable swiftness, for 'he deemed him a more declared foe than any other, and also the weakest of them all; and but that he had been helped by those of Burgundy on one side, and by the great lords from the south, the King would speedily have reduced him[2].' As it was, he gave them plenty to do. And had there been time he might have completely pacified the south; but the danger pressed at Paris, and he was fain to grant the southern nobles easy terms,—which they broke as soon as they dared. Then he marched quickly northwards. Charolais had pressed on with about fourteen hundred men-at-arms—ill-found and under small control, for the Burgundians had had peace for six-and-thirty years—with from eight to nine thousand archers, of whom the most were bad[3]; and with a fairly equipped 'artillery,' and an almost endless wagon-train.

The Count of Nevers had not impeded him at all: some thought he was friendly to the invaders; and Charolais marched quietly southwards paying for all he took; the Somme towns and other places stood by as neutrals, 'waiting to see which would prove the stronger, King or Lords.' Early in July the

[1] Charles of Anjou, Count of Maine, was younger son of Louis II, Duke of Anjou, and of Yolande of Aragon, and brother to the 'good king René.'
[2] Commines, I. iii. (i. p. 24).
[3] Ibid. I. ii. (i. p. 19).



Kitchin's France, Vol. II. to face p. 41.

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Burgundians were at S. Denis, hoping there to be joined by the others, who, however, had not come up. So Charolais reviewed his forces in sight of the Parisians, and skirmished with the King's men up to the very gates. The alarm spread through the city, men crying 'They are in.' But he drew back to S. Denis; whence, tired of waiting, he crossed the Seine at S. Cloud, moving southward to Longjumeau on the Orleans road; his van under S. Pol was pushed two leagues farther, and lay near Montleheri, where the castle held for the King. Thence he sent out scouts and horsemen, to feel for the royal army. It was agreed that, when the King came up, S. Pol should fall back on the main army at Longjumeau. Meanwhile the Dukes of Berry and Brittany were coming up from the south-west; and the Count of Maine, though his force was strong, offered no resistance, and fell back on the King.

Then arose the grave question, How should Louis reach Paris? Should he fight, or slip between the converging armies without a battle? It is not quite clear which was his plan; probably he was inclined to fight the Burgundians before the others could join them. And this would have been successful but for the conduct of the Count of Maine, who deserted him[1]. 'He had come,' he said, 'to serve the King by acting as intermediary between him and the princes of the blood-royal, but not to fight against them; and as it pleased the King to fight he would be gone, and so bade the King farewell, and drew away with his men, though he went not far off[2].' Thereon the King, much weakened, seems to have wished not to come into collision with the Burgundians. But Peter de Brezé, Seneschal of Normandy, who led the van, purposely brought his men

[1] He had a fine force; 2200 men-at-arms and the arrière-ban of Dauphiny. Each man-at-arms had with him seven men on horseback; so that there must have been over 17,000 men in all.

[2] Was he a traitor? Commines thinks not: 'je ne le sceuz oncques et ne le croy pas.' On the other hand, Olivier de la Marche, who was with the Burgundians, affirms that he was one of the Leaguers; and he had every opportunity of knowing. (Olivier de la Marche, c. xxxv, ed. 1785, p. 70.) Jean de Troye also says so (pp. 51, 52). There can be little doubt about it; he betrayed the king.

forward in such a way that a battle became inevitable. Dearly he paid for his neglect of orders; for he was among the first who fell.

It was on the 16th of July, 1465, a hot summer's morning; the dust was so thick that men were almost stifled, and could scarcely see one another; the corn being high added much to the suffering of the armies as they trampled through it. When the King drew near, S. Pol, instead of falling back as had been agreed, sent to Longjumeau an urgent request for support; and the Count of Charolais, supposing him unable to withdraw, hastened up, a two leagues' march without a halt. When they came in sight of Montleheri, the battle was not yet begun; and after much confusion the Count drew up his own men as centre and right wing, while S. Pol formed the left, having at his back a wood, in front the Castle of Montleheri, and his wagons so placed as to form a kind of rampart behind which he might retreat. The King, as his marching columns came up, drew them out behind a thick hedge and ditch, which separated them from the Burgundians, who, had they pushed on and attacked at once, instead of being in wild confusion, might have driven in the head of the King's army before it had time to deploy, thereby throwing his whole force into disorder. Instead, they let the King occupy Montleheri village and draw his vanguard out in line of battle. So they slowly stretched themselves out in two rough lines, the King's men being far fewer, but in much better order. The Burgundians, with their archers before them, waited till the royal army had issued from behind the hedge, coming out at the two ends of it. Then their men-at-arms and foot-soldiers thrust aside the archers before they had time to do much, and fell on the royal troops; these were pushed back, through the hedge, through Montleheri, and towards the hills to the south: the Count of Charolais, with a handful of men, following them half a league to the south of the village. The rumour spread that the King was killed; the Count of Maine and the rear guard now fled altogether from the field. Meantime the King's right had fallen on S. Pol, and driven him to

take shelter in the wood: the bulk of S. Pol's force fled away to the northward. The Parisians, hearing from his fugitives that the Burgundians were worsted, came out in crowds to take what spoil they could, and found plenty. Some of the panic-stricken soldiers fled till they reached Pont S. Maixence, on the way to Flanders; others ran till they met the advancing army of the Duke of Calabria, and reported all to be lost. Charolais himself had a narrow escape: he rode too far southwards in pursuit, and as he returned, in passing the Castle, was attacked by the garrison[1], sharply wounded, and all but taken prisoner. It was a strange battle: most of the Burgundians had fled; most of the King's men had run; the Count, with a scanty retinue of about thirty men, retired behind the great hedge; the King, with hardly a man at his back, except his Scottish guard, who stood firm, took refuge and rest in the Castle, where, for the first time that day, he brake fast. So both forces kept watch all the day, neither venturing again to attack the other[2]. When night came the King lit fires in the village; Charolais lay behind the hedge with his frightened handful of men[3]; and S. Pol joined him with about forty men-at-arms. The carnage had been great[4]; they had to clear away bodies to make room for the Count to sit. There in the darkness they debated what to do: the general voice was for a retreat to Flanders; the Parisians were on their rear, and might cut them off. In the end, it was agreed to stay where they were till day-break. Scouts were thrown out to spy where the King lay; but they only stared at the great fires in the village, and came back to say the King was there; whereon the little army was drawn out again for defence, 'though most would rather have run away.'

When however morning came, there came also tidings that

[1] Commines was riding by his side all the day: 'Comme il passoit rasibus du chastel veismes les archiers de la garde du Roy devant la porte.' Commines, I. iv. (i. p. 41).

[2] Commines, I. iv. (i. p. 45): 'Nul ne desiroit plus de combatre . . . estans sur ces pensées, et sans nulle escarmouche, survint l'entrée de la nuict.'

[3] Ibid. (i. p. 47): 'Nous avions grant nombre de blecez, et la pluspart fort descouragiez et espouventez.'

[4] Commines says 2000; Jean de Troye 3600.

early in the night Louis had silently slipped away under cover of his watch-fires, and was gone to Corbeil. Great was their joy to find that while they had been sitting shivering with fear they had all the time been the victors of the day. Commines, who saw the fighting, describes the grotesque scenes with infinite zest and humour: every one ran who could; the rest cowered for hours on the battle-field, afraid to fight after the first onset. Both sides claimed the victory: the Count, because he held the ground; the King, because he made his way safely to Paris. Louis on the one side, and the Count of S. Pol on the other, were the only men who showed any skill in war that day. But for the King's presence, says Commines, the royal army would have melted away[1]. The Count of Charolais showed then, as afterwards, that he had no true military gifts. The effect of this victory, undeserved as it was, on his character was immense. Hitherto he had disliked war; henceforth he seemed to be changed, counting the glory all his own, and asking counsel of no man: he became eager for fighting, whereby he worked his own ruin, and that of all his house[2].

No battle could have shown more clearly what was the true state of warfare in that day. It had been mere riding forward and 'pushing people about'; no strategy was known; the old feudal war was not yet displaced by the new war of artillery and trained soldiers: the one was passed, the other not yet developed. English Henry V had shown himself a real general; but when he died, he had no successor in the deadly game. War became mercenary, yet unorganised: it was a thing opposed to the genius of Louis XI; it was misunderstood by Charles the Bold.

The King lay two days at Corbeil; then marched down the right bank of the Seine towards Paris. It was a critical

[1] Commines, I. iv. (i. p. 45). Jean de Troye also bears witness to the king's courage; ed. 1786, p. 51: 'N'avoit cessé de combattre et faire grans armes toute la journée.' Again, p. 53: 'Il fut laschement servy de ses gens de guerre, et ne tint point à luy, car il estoit assez et trop vaillant.'

[2] Commines, I. iv. (i. p. 50).

moment in his fortunes: had Paris closed her gates on him, his kingdom would have been lost; for, as he often said to Commines, 'had he failed to get into Paris, he would have fled to the Swiss, or to Duke Francesco Sforza at Milan[1].' Had Charolais retraced his steps, he would have found his party strong in the capital, and the King's fortunes might have been undone. Instead of the bolder course, he marched on to meet the Dukes of Brittany and Berry, lying idly at Étampes for nearly a fortnight, while the King secured Paris by every art he knew. He lowered the taxes of the city, restored privileges, stirred up enthusiasm. He knew that the support of Paris was all-important; before Montleheri he had written to thank the burghers for 'their good-will and loyalty'; he told them he was sending the Queen to their care, that she might bear him a son there, 'in the city which in all the world he loved best[2].' It was a piece of his policy to pretend that he hoped for an heir, to damp the ardour of his brother Charles of Berry; but as a fact his son the Dauphin was not born till two years later.

The city thus secured, he left there the Count of Eu as his lieutenant, and set out for Normandy to gather fresh forces with which to face the League.

During these days Bretons and Burgundians joined hands at Étampes: they crossed the Seine on a floating bridge, and the very next night saw the watch-fires of the Duke of Calabria, who was coming up with the Lorrainers, Italians, and men of the duchy and county of Burgundy. Commines reckons the whole force at full 100,000 horse. At Charenton they passed over the bridge to the right bank of the Marne, and so came close to Paris; they at once showed in force under the walls, and occupied the park at Vincennes: the Duke of Berry, as head of the League, sent four letters into Paris addressed to the University, the Church, the Parliament, and the burghers, setting forth the objects of their armed levy, and asking for a

[1] Commines, I. viii. (i. p. 73). He professed sincerely that he 'would rather have lost half his realm than that any mishap had befallen Paris.' Jean de Troye, p. 48.

[2] Jean de Troye, p. 47.

conference. The civic authorities seemed likely to yield; there was among them a strong party, as of old, favourable to the Burgundians: but the Count of Eu, the King's lieutenant, made a great display of force, and the citizens of the King's side showed so savage a temper towards the authorities and the heralds, that the conference was broken off, and the peril passed. Four days later the King returned with a strong body of men from Normandy[1], and was received into his faithful city with loud cries of 'Noel.'

Then began a blockade: Charolais lay above, at the Grange aux Merciers, within a short distance of the walls; the Duke of Calabria was first at Lagny, then at Charenton, commanding the course of the two rivers, Seine and Marne; the Bretons occupied S. Denis; the rest were scattered among the villages round: those who afterwards came up from the south, as Nemours and Armagnac, lay farther off; for food was scarce in the camps. To the south the town was open; Charenton with Conflans above, and S. Denis below, closed the river-supplies from Champagne and Normandy. Yet the city never wanted food, while the princes suffered horribly; indeed had the King been sure of Paris he might have quietly waited till famine relieved him of his foes. But Paris was not safe: one night, after the siege had lasted some weeks, the King found the Bastille S. Antoine, which was close to the quarters of the Count of Charolais, left open, and some guns on the bastions spiked. Feeling his insecurity, and being still impatient of temper, the King began to treat for peace, hoping to sow distrust among the Leaguers, and perhaps to detach some: there was an incessant coming and going. The King refused to fight; he harassed them with sallies of small bodies of troops; he fired on them with 'serpentines' from the walls; he constructed a well-placed earthwork opposite Charenton, on the

[1] The king's Normans, the surest part of his garrison, wore a kind of uniform; those from Caen had that word embroidered on their jackets; the men of Alençon wore the motto 'Audi partem.' These are among the early germs of modern regimentals.

left bank of the Seine, hard by its junction with the Marne, whence he annoyed their headquarters exceedingly.

Matters pressed; the King thought it safest to deal in person with his foes, and was rowed up the Seine till he saw the Counts of Charolais and S. Pol standing on the bank. Then he hailed them from the water: 'Brother,' he cried to the Count, 'do you guarantee me?' He replied at once, 'Yes, Sire, as a brother.' Then the King landed, and walking between the two, discussed terms of peace. He agreed to all the demands of Charolais, offered S. Pol the Constable's sword, and charmed them by the grace and sweetness of his manners and talk: but to the demand that the Duke of Berry should have Normandy he would not consent. That question was left pending. As to the Public Weal, that, as Commines says, was 'turned to private gain[1].' So the King went back to his boat, and to Paris. The conferences continued at the Grange aux Merciers, Normandy being still the obstacle to peace. But news came that Madame de Brezé, widow of the seneschal who had perished at Montleheri, had given Rouen city and castle into the hands of the Duke of Bourbon, and that almost all the province had yielded to him: for the great Duchy yearned for a Duke of its own[2]. Pontoise—so important for communications—also had been sold, and its gates opened to the Duke of Brittany's men. Then the King, seeing that he could not cope with treachery as well as with force, and feeling that 'what was done could not be mended,' and that it was a small matter to give up what he had already lost, accepted the terms of the League in full: the Peace of Conflans was quickly agreed to and signed.

Not a word was breathed as to the 'Public Weal'; each man carried off his prize; and Louis XI was left sitting desolate in his fair city of Paris.

The Duke of Berry resigned that Duchy to the King, and was made Duke of Normandy; the Count of Charolais secured his

[1] Commines, I. xii. (i. p. 93).

[2] Ibid. I. xiii. (i. p. 98).

heart's desire, the Somme towns[1], also Guines and Boulogne. To the Duke of Calabria fell, as his share, certain places on the Lorraine frontier, a round sum of money, and soldiers at the King's charge. The Duke of Brittany, to the westward, secured Étampes and Montfort, with certain seignorial rights, including that of coining money; Bourbon recovered his pension, as in the days of Charles VII; Dunois got back all the King had taken from him, and a large pension besides; Dammartin had fair gifts, and all his lands restored; S. Pol was created Constable of France. As to the smaller men, 'each went off with his piece.'

There was not a word as to those States General, so much called for at the outset; nor much stand for the Pragmatic Sanction: but, that they should not seem utterly to have forgotten all their professions, the Leaguers made the King promise to name a commission of thirty-six notables—twelve nobles, twelve churchmen, twelve lawyers—to enquire of the state of the realm, and draw up ordinances and edicts which he bound himself to accept. But, as one of the chroniclers says, 'I have enquired thereof diligently, yet never could I learn who were the thirty-six, who was the first and who the last[2].' Still, the thirty-six were named, though nothing came of their labours[3].

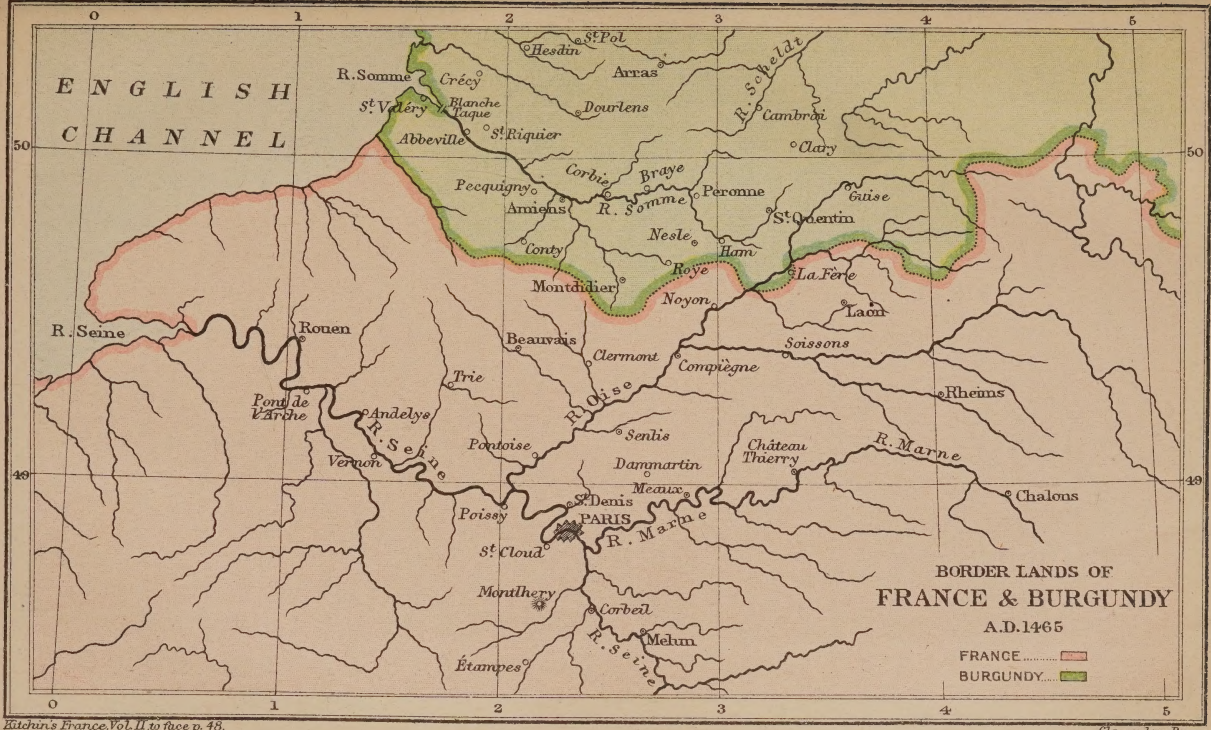
The Peace of Conflans, between Louis and Charles of Charolais, was signed October 5th, 1465; at S. Maur des Fossés a similar treaty was also signed by Louis and the confederate princes. It has been said that the nobles of France have ever been ready to sacrifice their permanent political fortunes for present gain: the war of the Public Weal is an early instance of the truth of this saying.

The Leaguers were very glad to have peace, for they were all but starved. The Burgundians and Bretons, when food was

[1] These were, in 1465, the Castle of Hondecourt, Bray, Peronne, Lehons, Liencourt, Fay, Chanle, Nesle, Beaulieu, Roye, Montdidier.

[2] Olivier de la Marche, c. xxxv. (ed. 1785, p. 88).

[3] Commines (ed. 1785), I. Preuves, p. 491, where the list is given in full, from the Collections of the Abbé le Grand.



Kitchin's France, Vol. II. to face p. 48.

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brought out, and a kind of fair set up in the fields outside the gate of S. Antoine, bought it at a great price, whereby the citizens got large profits[1]: 'their cheeks were thin and pendent, from the misery they had long undergone; most of them were barefoot; full of filth and vermin.' For a while the wealthy city fed them without being straitened; then they broke up and went home; the War of the Public Weal was over.

One might have thought that the feudal princes had utterly crushed the monarchy. Louis had made his first essay at government, and had failed; he was less of a king than four years back, when he was crowned at Rheims. Now, however, came the opportunity; for he shone in adversity; 'Never was any man so clever at dividing friends'; and he remembered the shrewd advice of his Italian teacher and friend Francesco Sforza—'grant all they ask, but be careful to keep your own people round you; means of separating the princes may easily be found[2].' At the King's instigation, as a first step, the Parliament of Paris refused to ratify or register the treaty of Conflans.

Nor had he long to wait: for the Duke of Brittany and Charles, the King's brother, now Duke of Normandy, fell out over their shares of spoil; the discord went so far that Brittany in fear and anger left Rouen and camped out on S. Catherine's hill, just above the town; thence, when the others threatened to assault him, he withdrew in great wrath to his own duchy. Then the King came down, and at once the strong places began to fall to him; he met the discontented Duke of Brittany at Caen, and made a treaty with him, by which he entirely severed the two comrades: the Duke withdrew into the heart of his territories; and Louis was left free to deal as he would with his brother Charles. Charles made no resistance, but followed the Duke of Brittany, and was once more reconciled with him, and, as Commines says, 'the two dukes were wise, Breton-fashion,

[1] Jean de Troye, pp. 100, 101.
[2] Commines, l. viii. (i p. 74).

when it was too late[1].' Rouen opened her gates to Louis; all Normandy was recovered by the King.

That within three months the treaty of Conflans should be thus torn in pieces was a deep mortification to the Burgundians: Charolais rightly felt that the best part of his work was now undone[2]. But what could he do? The League was broken up; the princes all gone home; his own army engaged, in bitter wintry weather, with his attack on Liège. So he gloomily accepted the King's excuses, and was fain to bide his time.

Shortly after this, Dammartin came over to the King's side; he was at once overwhelmed with gifts and honours, Louis rejoicing much to secure him: ever after this he was faithful to the monarchy even at the worst moments.

At the time of the siege of Paris, Louis had encouraged the men of Liège to revolt against their bishop, hoping thus to occupy the Burgundians. Liège felt no love for her powerful neighbour. The Meuse valley, lying between Teutonic Flanders and Hainault on the one side, and Teutonic Rhineland on the other, has ever maintained, thanks chiefly to the great Ardennes forest, a Celtic population, ingenious and given to busy industries, to manufactures and mining. Feudally under the Empire, the Meuse towns were politically inclined to depend on France, and opposed the House of Burgundy.

Now in 1445 Duke Philip had compelled the then Bishop of Liège to resign, and had imposed on the city as bishop Louis of Bourbon, a partisan of the Burgundians, and a man of bad character. The citizens hated and ejected him; a civic revolution followed, corresponding to the movements at this time going on in several German cities. The people chose sheriffs, named judges; the mendicant friars, men of the people, the liberal

[1] Commines, I. xvi. (i. p. 111): 'Ces deux Ducz estoient saiges après le coup (comme l'on dict des Bretons).'

[2] Ibid. I. xv. (i. p. 109): 'Luy douloit bien de veoir ceste division; car la chose du monde qu'il désiroit le plus, c'estoit de veoir ung duc en Normandie; car par ce moyen il luy sembloit le Roy estre affoibly de la tierce partie.'

clergy of their day, performed the offices of religion in place of the ejected bishop and chapter: the city called in a German prince, the Margrave of Baden, as its ruler. When news of the battle of Montleheri, described as a victory of Louis over Charles, reached Liège, the citizens at once sent a defiance to the Burgundian Court—they had been content hitherto with their revolution at home—and in combination with their neighbour Dinant, a town famous for 'Dinanderie,' its iron pots and pans[1], attacked the Duchy of Limburg. But Louis, on whom they had counted, could not help; Charolais, freed by the Peace of Conflans, marched on Dinant, and with horrible savagery uprooted the town, for the first time staining his hitherto fair name: Liège submitted.

Reeking with the blood of Dinant, he returned to Flanders, where he had tidings of his father's illness, and hastened to his bedside. His devotion to his aged parent was exemplary: the dying Duke begged him to rest, or he would fall ill: he refused to leave the bedside, and sat there attentive and sorrowful four days and nights, till the end[2]. The better nature of Charles showed itself in his real and extreme grief: for days he could not see one of his father's servants, or speak of him without tears. They buried Duke Philip at Bruges[3], amid the laments of his people. For fifty years had he ruled over them, this great Duke of the West, amazing them with his wealth, liberality, and gorgeous shows: they did not feel he was spoiling and debauching them, as was in truth the case. To him men had looked when Christendom was threatened; he had gathered states and cities under his more than royal hand; he had governed well, but had also shed seas of blood in order to be able so to govern. His lands were fertile, teeming with all manner of produce; his court splendid, and even for that age dissolute. He was corrupt but prudent; under him the

[1] 'Dinanderie' now is gingerbread.

[2] Duclercq, c. xiv. (ed. 1785, p. 483).

[3] The Duke's body was carried in 1473 to the Chartreux at Dijon, and laid among the bones of his ancestors.

glory of the dukedom of Burgundy reached its height. His successor was a man of purity and culture, but then he was also hasty, violent, and obstinate: the 'great thoughts' he had nourished in his younger days in the end brought him and his splendid House to destruction.

CHAPTER III.

Second Period of the Reign of Louis XI, A.D. 1467–1472 (*from the Accession of Charles the Bold to the end of the War of* 1472)[1].

The rivalry between Louis XI and Charles the Bold, which occupies us through this middle period of the King's life, was not merely the vulgar strife of neighbouring princes, but a serious collision of clashing principles, opposing ideas, and personages in every way antagonistic to one another. It is not altogether true to say, as has often been said, that Charles the Bold was the head of feudal anarchy as opposed to the incoming age of monarchical absolutism. No man ever made greater efforts to become an absolute sovereign than did Charles: his father was a great feudal potentate, no doubt; but the son, in all but the name, was a great monarch. The true difference was this:—while Louis XI was a successful master of the new kingcraft and so represented the modern ideas, Charles the Bold belonged to an earlier range of things, employed the older weapons, and so failed completely when he aimed at what was much higher—an imperial position, a grand lordship over many lands. In the main Charles was under the Empire: for though some of his vast territories were feudally under the King of France, he paid homage for by far the larger part to the Emperor, not to the King[2]. The bond connecting these great territories

[1] Charles the Bold made war against Louis XI as follows:—
1. As Count of Charolais—the 'Public Weal,' A.D. 1465.
2. On Duke Philip's death, ending after the interview of Peronne, A.D. 1467, 1468.
3. After the assembly of Notables at Tours, A.D. 1471.
4. The Second Great League, A.D. 1472.
5. The Anglo-Burgundian War, A.D. 1474.
After that he left France alone, and turned against Germany and the Swiss.

[2] See below, pp. 58, 59.

was not that of a monarchy: no joint national life was in them; they were wide apart in position, sympathies, and race-origin. The theory that Charles strove after a kingdom of Burgundy rests on but slight foundations: it was before his father's eyes, not before his, that Pope Pius II had hung out this dazzling prize[1]. What Charles aimed at, in the later, if not in the earlier years of his life, was the establishment of a grand 'Empire of the Rhine,' from source to mouth: and it is probable that in his dealings with the Emperor Frederick III he aimed at a kingship only in the special sense in which the presumed successor to the Empire was styled 'King of the Romans.' There is no trace, in his case, of a claim to another kind of royalty. Truly, as Commines says, Charles the Bold was a man of grand ideas, a dreamer,—whose dreams, but for the unfortunate coalition in his character of those dangerous qualities, pride, obstinacy, and wrathfulness, might have been realised in a new and splendid development of the Holy Roman Empire.

And though he failed, his daughter, Mary of Burgundy, the greatest heiress in Christendom, by carrying her vast possessions to Maximilian, laid the foundations of the grandeur of the House of Austria, and began the perennial rivalry between that House and the Kingdom of France; and thus in a sense his great schemes found fulfilment.

At the time of his succession to the splendid lordship left him by Duke Philip, Charles Count of Charolais was thirty-four years of age. He was blessed with a fine constitution, and had abilities far above the average; he was a man of unrivalled energy and industry, and, above all, one who was guided by a high sense of duty. Brought up in the midst of the luxury and corruption of his father's court, he seemed to pass unstained through it, a very knight of chivalrous romance, superior to all fears and temptations. He was open to all the better influences, and was caught by none of the seductive snares, of art and culture. In the studies now coming into fashion he was an

[1] Æneas Sylvius, Op. pp. 855, 856.

apt and diligent scholar: 'he learnt well at the school ... and retained what he learnt better than any one of his age[1].' In the best sense of the word he was a gentleman: refined, courteous, polished; he could dance beautifully, 'though not much addicted to such idleness,' was an excellent chess-player, a good musician, composing songs and motetts; no man was ever better at athletic games; none drew a truer bow: in the tourney he was the toughest combatant, 'not,' says Olivier de la Marche, 'as a prince or a lord fights, but like a hardy, puissant, formidable knight, giving and taking great blows, not sparing himself.' He knew not what fatigue was; for his fine constitution had been diligently trained to bear hardness[2]. He delighted in high and noble deeds, specially in the stories of Alexander or of the Romans; each night before he went to rest the Lord of Hymbercourt, 'who could read right well,' read to him for a couple of hours:—in striking contrast with the loose and vulgar story-telling that had been going on at the same time in the Dauphin's little court at Geneppe. This reading turned his mind to great thoughts of wide conquest, large dominion, imperial glories: everything in Charles points to empire, rather than to kingship. He grouped round him the best lawyers he could find, especially those skilled in the Roman Law: whereas Louis XI sent into Italy for modern politicians from Venice, that they might teach him statecraft. As an administrator at the outset of his reign he showed no small ability: he 'worked outrageously,' plunging into the distasteful maze of accounts, and trying to introduce a system of regular and equable taxation; 'but all,' it is added, 'not for the good of his people, but to augment his own pomp and wealth.' Nor did he only busy himself with taxes: he reformed his father's dissolute court; instead of the free life the 'good Duke's' courtiers led, there was solemn state; the common table was abolished; the new Duke took no pleasure in the convivial

[1] 'Apprenoit à l'eschole moult bien ... et retenoit ce qu'il avoit ouy mieux qu'autre de son aage.'

[2] Commines, I. iv. (i. p. 51).

company of friends and household, but placed between them and himself the barriers of a modern etiquette. In all things he indicates a wish to mould his father's feudal grandeur into a more formed and ordered lordship, according to the proud bearing of his motto, 'J'ay empris.' Chastellain, who knew him well, adds a remarkable trait: he loved to give lectures to his court, and did it well, for he was eloquent: he discoursed to them of virtue and self-restraint. Thrice a week he lectured in due form after dinner; benches were set before him, and there the nobles sat, each in his rank, whether they would or no. The discourses, moral and edifying as they were, seem to have proved rather wearisome to his audience[1].

To the calls of religion he paid sedulous attention: he fasted every great fast, was liberal of hand, true and faithful to wife and friend: 'a fair thing,' says Du Clercq, 'was the fair life they led in marriage[2]': 'in the days of his virtuous youth,' says Olivier, 'he was prudent, open-handed and truthful, and cultivated such manners and such virtues, that I have never read of nor have I ever seen so virtuous a young prince[3].'

With this noble character and this vigorous constitution he had also great gifts of personal beauty. 'His eyes angelically clear,' though with depths of latent fire in them; his face massive and stedfast, and of a rich brown tint, betraying his southern blood; his hair thick, curling stiffly. But this fine face could grow dark and severe when the under-nature was aroused; then it was terrible to see. 'In his youth,' says Olivier, 'he resisted his temperament[4]'; no one was more courteous and gentle than he. In his younger days he even disliked the noble pastime of war, though he delighted much in all knightly exercises; not till that absurd battle of Montleheri did he seem to have 'tasted blood,' and to have become aware of the tiger-nature within[5].

[1] Chastellain (ed. 1836), pp. 448, 449. [2] Du Clercq, c. ii.
[3] Olivier de la Marche, c. xxviii. (ed. 1785), i. pp. 406, 407.
[4] Commines, V. ix. (ii. p. 66): 'Pour le temps que je l'ay congneu, il n'estoit point cruel; mais le devint avant sa mort.'
[5] Ibid. I. iv. (i. p. 50): 'Estoit très inutile pour la guerre paravant ce

Such was Charles the Bold, when in 1467 he became the head of the house of Burgundy. But, as the proverb has it, mastership, like wine, unmasks the man: and the three demons lurking within him, and kept hitherto under stern control, now broke out and drove him to destruction. His three dangerous qualities were, first, pride; he was proud, while Louis was only vain; the one proud of his great position[1], the other vain of his skill. Next, he was choleric; once he actually killed an archer who disobeyed him; in his later days he became terrible to all: and thirdly, and above all, he was obstinate, took no advice, doggedly held his ground; the tenacity he showed at Neusz contrasts singularly with the shifts and changes of Louis, who cared nothing what means he tried so long as he arrived at his end. Both these princes are marked examples of deterioration: in the one the hot nature gets the mastery; year by year he grows fiercer, more overbearing, more terrible: in the other the cold nature rules; year by year Louis grows more selfish, more solitary, more silently cruel and absolute. Thus often to mixed and strong characters there comes a day of conversion; it may be for good or for evil: the forces before depressed now dominate, the direction of the career changes, the complexion of the man's acts takes tone from the new influences; and unhappy the man and the people in which this change, as in the case of Charles the Bold, is from the nobler to the worse, from spirit to matter, from vigour to violence, from wholesome strictness to cruelty.

To this new Duke of Burgundy how many noble provinces looked with hope and with desire! The extent of his lands was wonderful. Even at his accession Duke Charles was the greatest prince of the Empire; before his Swiss wars ruined him he had grown to be the greatest prince in Europe. His territories lay on the frontiers of the German-speaking and the

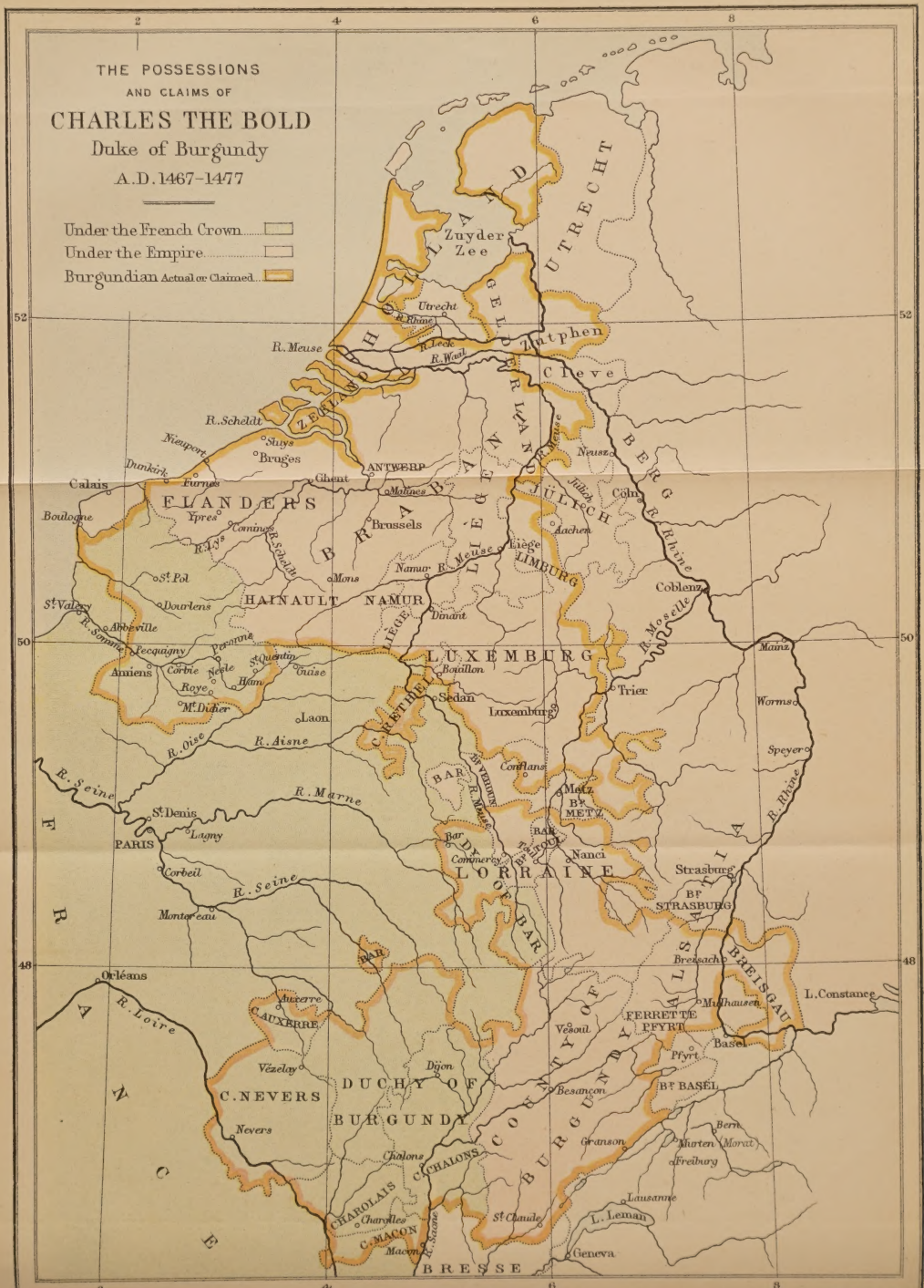
jour, et n'aymoit nulle chose qui y appartinst, mais puis changèrent ses pensées, car il y a continué jusques à sa mort: et par là fut finée sa vie, et sa maison destruicte.'

[1] Commines, V. ix. (ii. p. 66): 'Toutes les graces et honneurs qu'il avoit receuz en ce monde il les estimoit toutes proceder de son sens et de sa vertu, sans les atribuer à Dieu.'

French-speaking races: both races were represented among his subjects. At the height of his power his lands, roughly speaking, formed a vast arch, stretching from the Flemish seaboard to Switzerland: the stones of the arch were Flanders, Holland, and Gelderland, then Hainault and Brabant, Namur and Luxemburg, Limburg also; then Lorraine, the Duchy and County of Burgundy, and lastly Alsace, with, for a time at least, the Breisgau across the Rhine. Among these, Lorraine was evidently marked out by nature as the keystone of the fabric: it was central, easy of access from either side, a line of communication between Germany and France. In Picardy to the north, and in the Duchy of Burgundy in the east, his territories struck far into the heart of France: while the more northern parts were substantive lordships under the Empire. There is extant[1] a record of the homage done by Philip the Good to Louis XI on his accession in 1463, which gives us the extent of territory feudally under the King of France. This was the Duchy of Burgundy, and the 'Peerage and office of Dean of Peers thereto attaching'; the county of Flanders, with its Peerage; the County of Artois, and 'all other lands and lordships that he held in France.' The Netherland part of the Duke's lands was fairly solid and coherent: Flanders, Brabant, Hainault, and Gelderland, in spite of the turbulent vigour of the commercial cities, formed the true heart of his territorial power, with Brussels for their capital. The great blunder of Charles lay in this, that he oppressed and bled these wealthy and compact states in order to carry out his grand ideas in the east; that in fact he aimed at making Nanci the capital and centre of his chain of states, instead of being content with a less ambitious and more secure power in the west and north-west of the Empire. His was naturally the headship of the Low Dutch branch of the Germanic peoples: but he threw away that fine position, that he might grasp at a shadow, and fall[2].

[1] Commines (ed. 1785), Preuves de la Préface, i. pp. 240, 242.

[2] This is the place for a summary of his territories. On the death of



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By far the largest part of his lands, then, were German: and consequently the Duke, though French by origin, seemed long to waver between a French or a German policy. There were yet before him two problems: both he doubtless hoped to solve in course of time; but which should be taken first? The two problems were:—Should he keep down the King of France by a combination of princes all round his frontiers, so carrying on the policy of the league of the Public Weal and increasing his own power? or, Should he consolidate himself to the north and east, and build up an Empire of the Rhine? The former, the French policy, was one of coalition; the latter, the German, of consolidation: the former feudal, the latter monarchical, even imperial. On the one side we have his famous sarcasm, 'I love so well the Kingdom of France, that for one king there I would gladly see six': on the other side we have his speech at Nanci, in which

Philip of Rouvres, last Duke of the first line, in 1361, the Duchy of Burgundy fell to the French crown, and the County (Franche Comté) passed to Margaret, daughter of Louis III de Mâle. In 1363 King John of France granted the Duchy to his fourth son Philip the Bold, and this grant was confirmed by Charles V in 1364. Philip the Bold got Flanders, Artois and Franche Comté, on the death of Louis de Mâle in 1384, by marrying his widow Margaret. Antony, second son of Philip the Bold, became Duke of Brabant and Limburg in 1404; on the ending of his line in 1430 these lands passed to the elder branch in the person of Philip the Good (who had also bought Namur in 1421). Philip also wrested from Jacqueline of Holland her inheritances in Hainault, Holland, Brabant, and Zealand, in 1433, 1436. By the Treaty of Arras in 1435 he got the Somme valley with its towns, and (on the other side) the counties of Auxerre and Mâcon. Finally, as protector of his aunt, Elisabeth of Luxemburg, and by purchase (in 1444), he succeeded to the Duchy of Luxemburg. Of the Netherlands eleven provinces (all Holland and Belgium that now are, except Gelderland, Friesland, and Liège) were now his; and in 1469, by a transaction and money-lending with Sigismund of Austria, he got hold of Upper Alsace and the Breisgau, as a kind of security. Gelderland and Zütphen became his in 1473 on the death of the old Duke Arnold, who left them to him rather than to his son; and who had received a money-consideration for so doing. In the same year he seized on the Duchy of Lorraine, though he was compelled to let it go for a time. He conquered it, as he thought, permanently in 1475, as he was on his way to his overthrow in Switzerland. What could be more splendid than the roll of the titles of Duke John: 'Mr. le Duc de Bourgongne, de Lotrich, de Brabant, de Limburg, et de Luxemburg, Counte de Flandre, d'Artois et de Bourgongne, Palatin de Hollande de Zelande et de Namur, Margrave du St. Empire, Sire de Friese de Salins et de Malines.' Quoted by Michelet, tom. v. p. 406.

he indicated his intention of making that city the capital of his empire.

Now, from his accession to the winter of 1472, Charles followed almost exclusively the former of these two lines of policy: from that date till his death, though he did not abandon his outlying western alliances, he quite changed his course and struck for the Rhine. The acquisition of Gelderland, which gave him the mastery over the Rhine-mouths, seems to have afforded the motive for the new policy; it was the pivot on which the line was changed.

Correspondingly, the policy of Louis XI has also two periods; the active and the observant. While Charles interfered in northern and western France, Louis had to fight for his life, intrigue playing only a secondary part. Later, when the Duke was on the Rhine, or in Lorraine or Switzerland, the King fights no longer: he sees that his favourite weapons will also be the best for his purpose; he intrigues with skill and success, weaves fine nets, encourages the hostile forces with words and money:—but not a man does he set on foot: vigilant, incessant, an impalpable foe, his influence dogs the footsteps of the Great Duke, a malign shadow falls on the best-laid plans; the strong man wearies himself in vain, beating the air; no blows can reach the hidden enemy. And lastly, the counsellors round the King, so far as he let them counsel him[1], represented also these two lines of policy. Dammartin and the soldiers were all for fighting; Balue with the churchmen and the lawyers rejoiced in quiet intrigues.

Tempting as is the drama of the career of Duke Charles, with its grand central figure, stirring scenes which rouse the dullest imagination, and its terrible tragical end, still it does not really belong to the history of France. It borders on it,

[1] Brezé, the old Seneschal of Normandy (who said 'my seal is with them, but my body with you,' when the King taxed him with joining the League in 1465), a man who had a way of saying what he thought, one day saw the King riding on a little jennet: 'I could not have believed,' he said, 'that that horse was so strong'; and when the King asked Why? he added, 'Why? because he is strong enough to carry *the King and all his council*.'

and during the earlier period affects it constantly and deeply; but during the later or heroic period it scarcely touches France, till it is all over. We will therefore deal but slightly with it—giving it a treatment quite unworthy of the subject, but as large perhaps as the matter in hand permits.

The years that followed the Peace of Conflans were spent by the King in consolidating his strength against the outer circle of his assailants. That he held the central position was all-important: and the centre of that centre was Paris; the one hope therefore for Louis lay in the city's loyalty to him, and in the chance he had of arousing some feeling in France on his behalf. With a view to the first he set himself to strengthen in every way his hold on the capital; for the second, he convoked the Three Estates at Tours. At this time he also began to act more prudently towards his servants: he no longer suddenly raised or debased them; those who were faithful he attached still more firmly to his side. Such a man was Dammartin, his old foe, now his staunchest friend; such, so far as the King was concerned, might have been that schemer S. Pol, the ambitious small man between two great ones. To him was given the Constable's sword; he desired a great marriage, and the King got him a Savoyard princess, his niece, and betrothed the Count's daughter to his own nephew. He promised him the County of Eu, to extend his lands to the sea. He gave him the town of Guise, and foot-hold in Normandy[1]. The King meant him to be his instrument for the recovery of those Somme towns which play so large a part in the history of this period. Those towns were now smarting under the Duke's heavy taxation, and 'were angry at being no longer under the King of France.' On another ground they were very important to France. From Amiens the Duke of Burgundy could stretch out a hand to the Duke of Normandy, if he were hostile to the King; and Normandy touched on Brittany. So that a chain could thus be formed to exclude the French King from the West coast. This

[1] Michelet, vi. p. 196.

done, it was reckoned that with help of the English, with whom Burgundy and Brittany were ever dealing, Louis might be made entirely powerless. This is why Charles was so stiff as to Normandy at Conflans; this the secret of the King's haste to eject his weak brother from that Duchy.

In connexion with this policy, the Duke in 1466 allied himself closely with the House of York, then dominant in England. On the other hand, the English nobles sent their champion Warwick to Paris to conclude a peace with Louis, whether their king liked it or not. For all that, there remained the formidable fact, that English Edward, if he could, would take a prominent part on the side of the League. An English force was sent to Calais in 1467; five hundred Englishmen appeared in the Burgundian army. At the moment of the old Duke's death, this new League, a league of princes, not of nobles, embraced Burgundy and England, Brittany, Aragon, and Castile.

To quench this outer circle of fire the King strained every nerve. He had already done his best for Paris; he had granted her great privileges, and made her free from taxation; he now gave her arms and banners[1]. Pains were taken to re-people the town; for war and mortality had thinned its population. The Church and the Bar, Notre Dame and the Parliament—the two dwellers in the Cité—were conciliated: the King had not always treated them so considerately. He and his queen came into Paris in the autumn of 1467, and were received with high pomp and festival[2]. Then he held a great review of all Parisians, from sixteen years old to sixty; a vast muster of men, more or less armed, more or less drilled. 'Sire,' said one to the King, as they were looking on, 'do you know that in this muster there are more than ten thousand men who could not go ten leagues on horse without baiting?' 'By my faith,' replied the King, with a smile, 'I do think their wives would ride better

[1] Jean de Troye (ed. 1786), pp. 142, 143; Ordonnances des Roys, xvi. p. 671, June 1467.

[2] Jean de Troye (ed. 1786), p. 147.

than they[1].' Still, good with bad, it was an imposing display of strength: Jean de Troye thinks there were from sixty to eighty thousand under arms, 'all in fair order, without confusion or noise.' They marched eastwards out of the town, as far as Conflans, and home again. The King also saw to the civic defences. He struck sharply and with mystery at his foes in the town: these were the days of Tristan l'Hermite, and of men suddenly seized and darkly disappearing. The heads of men known to be favourable to the Burgundians were never safe; the more notable among them perished.

And now the coalition began to move: the Duke of Burgundy was too much engaged at home to come south at once; but the Bretons entered Normandy, and took Caen and Alençon, menacing the Seine, and calling on their English allies to make a descent: they offered to hand over to them twelve strongholds as a base for their operations.

Then Louis played another card: he 'condescended' to convoke the States General[2] at Tours for April 6th, 1468. They came in fair numbers: many churchmen and nobles, and, for the third Estate, 'sixty good towns sent each its three deputies, a priest and two laymen[3].'

[1] Cabinet de Louis XI, p. 11.

[2] Jean de Troye, p. 167: 'Enfin le roy se condescendit que les trois Estats se tiendroient et assembleroient, et pour ce faire leur fut lieu assigné en la ville de Tours.'

[3] The States General of France, the solemn meetings of the three Estates, clergy, nobles, and commons, were general assemblies convoked at intervals of very various length, whenever the king 'condescended' to call them together. They were three independent and coordinate bodies, sitting, debating, voting in separate chambers. The name first appears early in the fourteenth century. We rarely find any real constitutional action. 'From the ninth to the sixteenth century,' says Sir James Stephen (Lectures on the History of France, ii. p. 348), 'the King was the real as well as the nominal lawgiver of France.' Their functions were limited to expression of opinion on points laid before them by the King, or on *gravamina* brought up by them from the country. They usually supported the monarchy, whether against Pope or Templars, or as when they ransomed 'John the Good,' or decided succession questions, or refused to sanction alienations of territory. They also dealt, with a timid hand and slightly, with internal troubles and difficulties; they went against the Huguenots, against Henry IV when he was struggling to secure the crown; they were consulted as to the majority of Louis XIII. In the matter of

The question laid before them by their sovereign was this:—Can the King for the time being alienate the Duchy of Normandy? Their reply was prompt and clear: The King 'has but his voyage,' he is but a passenger, while the realm remains; consequently the realm alone can give or take away; the King has no right to alienate any part of his realm. The reply is intended to apply to the Somme towns quite as much as to Normandy. It was also agreed what the apanage of Charles, the King's brother, should be, and that he should be styled

gravamina, they listened to complaints, and formulated their *cahiers* (or 'quires') of grievance, which they laid solemnly before the King for his consideration, leaving all amendment entirely in his hands, for they had no power of redress. In a few instances they sanctioned taxation, and even voted subsidies; but this most important function was exercised rarely and uncertainly. Once only (in 1560) do they seem to have attempted actual legislation. The nearest approach to real Parliamentary Government took place when they met under the influence of Étienne Marcel in 1356, though even then it is doubtful how far the Estates were a true representation of the three bodies. At that time they debated in one chamber, and recognised three great principles (see vol. i. p. 436): (1) The right of frequent and regular session; (2) the right of equal taxation; (3) the right to control the King in the matter of taxation, and to abolish his power of levying aids and taxes at his own pleasure. But this was only a gleam of constitutional light: with Marcel's death the parliamentary system perished also. It is singular that in 1541 Seyssel (Grande Monarchie de France, c. xiii. p. 170) declares that the three estates are 'la noblesse, le peuple moyen que l'on peult appeller le peuple gras, et le peuple menu,' omitting the clergy, 'because they belong alike to all estates.'

The most important meetings of the Estates were as follows:—Under Philip IV (1301, 1302) against Boniface VIII; in 1308 against the Templars; in 1314 to levy taxes; in 1317 and 1328 on the Salic Law and the royal succession; in 1356, 1357, under Marcel; in 1420 to ratify the Treaty of Troyes, and to vote a subsidy (this was under that Parliamentary King, Henry V of England); in 1468 at Tours, to save Normandy for the crown; in 1484 to fix the age of the majority of Charles VIII (when the chambers were elective and parliamentary forms were observed); in 1560 to make Catherine dei Medici Regent of France, and to draw up a Commercial Code; in 1593 to support the League against Henry IV; in 1614 on the majority of Louis XIII (a very 'bear-garden' for confusion and quarrelling); and lastly, in 1789, when the Estates eventually were merged in the Constituent Assembly. Finally, as Sir James Stephen adds, the questions as to the true composition of the States, their procedure, competency, constitutional authority, are both 'obscure and intricate.' Throughout, the kings claimed and exercised at will the right of law-making by their Ordonnances, of laying and levying taxation, of redressing gravamina; so that the constitutional powers of the Estates were always very limited; and when the monarchy became really strong, the Estates were never again summoned to meet.

Count or even Duke; and that the King should also grant him a large pension; but the Duchy of Normandy should not be his; it was not for the King to grant it away, or to dismember the realm. Notable words, which make us regret that the French kings had not the wisdom and patriotism to strengthen the nation by giving practical and permanent functions to the States-General, the true Parliament of France. The Estates promised warmly to support the King: he had laid before them an account of the communications going on between Brittany and England, which seemed likely to result in a fresh war, renewing the old miseries of France. The clergy thereon undertook to make prayers, and find funds out of their temporalities; the nobles and the third Estate also agreed to help according to their means. The King farther induced them to approve of a commission, chosen from all the Estates, to remedy abuses and to order the course of law. A singular decree was also agreed to: it was ordered that 'Monseigneur de Charolais' (so they still style the Duke of Burgundy), 'seeing he is both near kinsman of the King and also a Peer of France,' should be called on to occupy himself sedulously with this matter—a curiously indirect defiance to the Duke, as the prime mover in these troubles.

A report of these proceedings was laid before the Duke, who was at Cambrai, holding an assembly of his friends. The haughty contempt with which he treated the ambassadors from France helped to strengthen the King by alienating the nobles, whom the Duke insulted. The King had already secured himself to the south and south-east by making terms with the Bourbons and with the great House of Anjou. Even the shifty Count of Maine swore to be true to him, taking oath on the dreaded cross of S. Lou of Angers. Charles, the King's brother, weak in mind and body, gave him little uneasiness: the English King was not firmly enough established at home to venture on braving the anger of Warwick and his party. Thus only Brittany and Burgundy remained as formidable antagonists; the former had already begun war; the latter was gathering a

menacing force in Picardy near Peronne[1], and only paused to secure his English allies still more closely by his splendid wedding with Margaret of York (2nd July, 1468).

This was the moment which Louis seized for a swift attack on Brittany; fortnight by fortnight he prolonged a precarious but precious truce with Charles the Bold, offering also to abandon Liège if the Duke would abandon the Bretons[2]. He had tempted Liège to resist, and was now ready to leave her to perish; her ruin, then and later, seemed to him as nothing compared with his own interests. He marched two armies into Brittany, one from the side of Normandy, the other through Anjou. The Duke of Brittany could not stand against it; even Charles, the King's brother, rather hindered than helped his friend, and Louis found means to win to his side the Lord of Lescun, the adviser and real ruler of both these weak princes. The Duke gave way, signed a treaty at Ancenis (10th Sept. 1468), and submitted the grievances of Charles his ally to the arbitration of the Duke of Calabria and the Constable S. Pol.

So far the King had succeeded beyond all expectation: the chain was broken; he had now only to make front against one single foe, though that foe was the formidable Duke of Burgundy.

How should he act? With the Duke of Brittany, who was weak, he had acted boldly with a strong hand. But seeing an English fleet at Portsmouth threatening a descent, and the Burgundian army flushed with recent victory at Liège, Louis, though his forces were probably larger and better disciplined than his rival's, still hesitated to move forwards. He was between Dammartin the soldier, who urged him to fight boldly, and Balue the courtier-churchman, who shone in negociation, and wished him to treat. The soldier hoped for the joys of war and its rewards; the priest would show his skill in the council-

[1] Jean de Troye, p. 178: 'Aux camps près de Peronne, entre Esclusiers et Cappy . . . édifier un parc audit lieu . . . le dos au long de la rivière de Somme.'

[2] Commines, II. ii. (i. p. 123).

chamber, and longed to make his profits out of it. Dammartin, too, had lately executed the King's will on Charles of Melun for his desertion of the royal cause at Montleheri, and had been rewarded with the grant of his forfeited lands: he naturally dreaded peace between the King and the Princes. Moreover, S. Pol's hopes and ambitions all depended on keeping the King and the Duke apart. On the other hand, Louis felt that the risks were immense; a battle lost was almost a kingdom thrown away: how far, too, could he trust his chief officers? He was surrounded by treason; his own falseness led him to suspect that all were false; in which he was not far wrong. Under the circumstances he decided on treating with the Duke after all, placing himself in the hands of the false counsellor Balue, instead of trusting the honest soldier Dammartin. It would be a doubtful thing, he thought, to cope with the strong Duke in war; whereas he had a firm belief in his own superiority in the arts of negociation, and his vanity was touched by the prospect of carrying his point by skill in dealing with men: so, finally, he took the amazing resolution of going in person to meet the Duke, and of placing himself unreservedly in his hands[1]. 'Great is the folly,' says Commines[2], 'of a prince who places himself in the power of another'; it is a moment of 'great frauds, deceits, and perjuries'; of captivities and violent deaths. And Louis came very near the last and worst of these evils, while he proved the truth of all the rest.

The Duke, who did not much desire to see him, granted him a full safe-conduct, 'come what might[3].' So the King went, with a scanty following; the Duke rode out to meet him, and escorted him into Peronne; he lodged him in a goodly house in full view of the Tower of Peronne, and as he did so, pointed

[1] In Commines, ed. Dupont, Preuves, vol. iii. pp. 226–236, there are three contemporary accounts of the Peronne interview, besides the narratives given by Commines himself (who was a chief actor in the scene), by Jean de Troye, and by Olivier de la Marche.

[2] Commines, II. vi. (i. p. 155).

[3] 'Pour quelque cas qui soit, et qui puisse advenir' is the phrase in the Duke's letter.

out to him with grim pleasure in the historical detail, that in that Tower 'once a king of France lay a prisoner[1].' The King's guards were lodged at the other end of the town; and, as if to complete his uneasiness, a few minutes after his arrival there came clattering up the street a string of horsemen, and from his windows Louis saw a band of his bitterest enemies, men who thirsted for his blood, dismounting at the castle gate. That evening the King, in deep alarm, finding that the horsemen were gone away again, moved into the safer quarters of the castle, uncomfortable as it was; in fact, he placed himself in a kind of voluntary imprisonment, in the very spot where Karl the Simple had lain a captive. Negociations began at once, and were continued for some days, the Duke often deliberating whether to imprison or to kill the King. But to imprison him was not safe—'what cage could hold so great a bird?'—and to kill him would be impolitic; for on his death Charles would succeed to the throne, and Charles was the friend of Brittany; consequently, his accession would rather strengthen than weaken the monarchy. And again, as Michelet[2] phrases it, 'only one half of the King was captive'; the other half, the royal army, lay to the north and east of Paris[3], menacing and strong, and commanded by Dammartin and those angry captains, who had counselled war, when 'Reynard had chosen to go and put his head into Isengrim's den.' Only too glad would they be to march and fall on the rich Burgundian lands. Therefore nothing was done: the Duke of Burgundy may have hoped that one day his friends in France might succeed in betraying both the King and his brother into his hands[4]: possibly he thought to attain his end in some other way.

And now things came to a crisis. Before he had thought of

[1] Karl the Simple was confined there by Herbert of Vermandois in 923. He died in prison there in 929 (see vol. i. p. 176).

[2] Michelet, Histoire de France, vi. p. 276 (ed. 1852).

[3] Commines, ed. Dupont, Preuves, iii. p. 233: 'Auprès d'illec, savoir est à Meaux, à Senlis et à Compiègne, il y avoit xii c. lances: et d'aultre coste Mr. de Calabre et Mr. le prince de Navarre estoient à Meaux et à Paris.'

[4] The narrative in Commines, Preuves (ed. Dupont, iii. p. 235), says distinctly that Balue had promised to do this for the Duke.

going to Peronne the King had sent two men to incite the citizens of Liège to revolt once more; and now, while the Duke's mind was still doubtful, they struck a sudden blow. The Bishop of Liège, the cause of all their ferment, was at Tongres, under the care of the Lord of Hymbercourt. Suddenly came tidings to Peronne that the men of Liège had swooped down on Tongres, and, as the news ran, had killed the Bishop and Hymbercourt, and had put the canons to the sword. As a fact, neither Bishop nor Lord had been touched; but the story did its work. In a blaze of anger Charles the Bold shut himself up three days in his quarters, nursing his wrath; on the fourth day he suddenly determined to go and see the King. Philip of Commines, who here appears on the scene, slipped out and ran down to the castle, and with the uttermost eagerness, and apparently in mortal fear, begged the King to grant everything—everything, or his life was gone! Louis, already dejected and suspicious, and personally timid, agreed to surrender all—and then the Duke appeared. It reads like a well-timed piece of acting throughout. 'His voice trembled, so moved he was, and so nigh unto wrath.' The King could not conceal his terror; he agreed to everything. Peace was made on the basis of the Treaty of Conflans, except that Charles, the King's brother, was to have Champagne and Brie instead of Normandy—a stipulation which may be regarded as a first sign of a change of policy on the Duke's part; for these districts in the hands of a friend would cover and secure Lorraine, and give through communication between Flanders, Luxemburg, and the Duchy of Burgundy. It was a first tentative step towards consolidation[1]. Then, to crown the King's humiliation, the Duke asked him if he would not like to go with him to Liège and help to punish the treason of the citizens; and Louis, false-hearted and shameless, replied he would willingly go if peace were first signed: which was forthwith done; King and

[1] As Mdlle. Dupont shows, this stipulation does not appear on the face of the treaty; it must have been a secret article, for Commines and Olivier de la Marche, who both mention it, cannot have been mistaken.

Duke swearing on 'the true cross which S. Charlemagne wore[1].' The Duke had violated the safe-conduct; the King felt himself bound only by force; both King and Duke evaded their oaths soon after.

Then they set forth for Liège—a terrible punishment for Louis, who must have felt deep mortification at his position. Here were the men of Liège displaying the lilies on their walls, and fighting to the cry of 'Vive France'; and here was the King of France, in the train of his foe and theirs, marching to destroy them. The citizens made but brief resistance; the place fell; Louis took his share of the fighting eagerly, and rejoiced at the triumph of his antagonist; he drained his cup of disgrace to the very dregs. Nor did he waste his breath in intercession for his friends whom he had deluded to their ruin: the execution of the city began under his very eyes; pillage, violence, brutality, raged fiercely for a while, followed by a long and steady extermination: executions went on for months; all who had not succeeded in escaping perished; the city walls were rolled into the ditch.

Then the Duke thought that he might let his degraded rival go. They parted like friends. But as the King was riding off he turned and said, 'If perchance my brother refuses the lands I grant him for love of thee, what wouldst thou I should do?' and the Duke answered without thinking, 'If he wills not to take them, but you satisfy him otherwise, I will leave it to you two[2].' These words the King bore in mind when he persuaded Charles to take Guyenne instead of Champagne, placing thereby all France between him and the Duke, while he also made it impossible for him to be very friendly with the English crown, which still claimed its old possessions in the south of France.

So the King returned home, degraded and depressed. No wonder he was ill for a time, after this hurricane of passion, fear, and failure. After Montleheri and the siege of Paris, he had but bowed to his fate, when he signed away more than half his

[1] Commines, II. ix. (i. 175). [2] Ibid. II. xiv. (i. p. 220).

power; but now he was discredited before all the world; he had seen Liège perish, and, worst of all, had shown himself unskilful in his own business of treating and finesse. He was not sensitive; but to fail in his own art was a great blow to his self-esteem. And he showed it in a singular way: soon after his return he forbade all attacks on the Duke of Burgundy, 'whether by mouth, writing, signs, pictures, songs, rondeaux or ballads, or otherwise,' for such attacks reflected also on himself. Above all, he ordered the seizure of all caged pies, jays, owls. These were all brought before him, and note taken whence they came, and what words they could say; for tradition tells that men taught the birds to cry 'Perette' and 'Peronne,' to the great derision of the King[1].

In these dark days literature herself took a cynical and derisive tone. It was a kind of 'despotism tempered with epigrams,' a clear sign of a diseased and wretched state of the public mind. The King himself set the example; he was given to sarcastic speeches, such as that which he made when some one wished for S. Pol to give advice, 'Yes,' he said, 'I will send for him; in such a crisis one has need of a head like his—his head, you know, not his body[2].' Paris was now full of 'epitaphs and defamatory libels'; such was the Emperor Frederick's famous apologue of the Bear and three Hunters; such the message of Louis to King Edward IV, which he sent him with an ass, a wolf, and a boar[3]. We have but to look into the farce of Patelin, which appeared at this time, to see that violence, robbery, dull trickery, were the measure of the relations between gross traders and ignorant peasants[4]. The laughter of that age was not pleasant to hear.

Lastly, it came out that Cardinal Balue, who owed all to Louis, had played him false, and had throughout been in secret correspondence with the Duke of Burgundy. Not long

[1] Jean de Troye, pp. 186, 187.
[2] Commines, IV. xi. (i. p. 384).
[3] Jean de Troye, p. 279.
[4] See Michelet, Renaissance, Introduction, § xii. (Histoire de France, vii. 79, ed. 1874).

before this, at Balue's suggestion, the King had ordered iron cages to be made to hold such prisoners as it might be dangerous to kill and difficult to keep. Into one of these horrible torture-cells Balue himself was thrust, and therein for ten years he meditated on the excellence of his own invention.

Dammartin had served his King with remarkable skill, firmness, and loyalty; he was now sent to reduce the Southern lords, Nemours and Armagnac, and brought them both to submission.

Then Louis summoned an assembly of Notables[1] at Tours, 'calling none but those he had nominated,' most of them being lawyers or magistrates. To this prepared audience he made his complaints against the Duke of Burgundy. They replied by declaring that the Duke, by harassing the harbours of Normandy and Eu, by wearing the English Order of the Garter[2], and by other hostile acts, had broken the Treaty of Peronne, and so had released the King from his engagements. It was a comedy, no doubt; but some of the complaints seem to have been well grounded. The King at once egged on S. Pol, to whom war was advancement and safety, while peace was fruitless if not ruinous, called out his companies, and seized the border-towns Amiens, S. Quentin, Roye. The royal army was excellently equipped and disciplined; the Duke was taken by surprise; he had sent home all his feudal levies, and had no system answering to that of the free-archers on which to fall back. He did his best to meet the blow, gathered five hundred men, secured Abbeville and Arras, and took up a strong position near Pecquigny on the Somme. For a time he was in no little risk; the King had friends in all the large towns, who,

[1] Commines, III. i. (i. p. 211), calls it an assembly of the Three Estates. He is confused between this packed convocation of Notables in 1470, and the actual States General of 1468.

[2] To wear an Order was to acknowledge the giver as your superior, and to place yourself under his command. So when the Order of S. Michael was founded in 1469 it was offered to the Duke of Brittany, who refused it, and accepted the Fleece of Gold from Charles the Bold in preference, showing thereby that he was still in opposition to the Crown. Of course, between sovereign princes, the giving and accepting involved no submission, only betokened friendship.

weighted with oppressive taxes, and shocked by the savage destruction of Dinant and Liège, were disposed to rise and shake off the Burgundian yoke; Antwerp, Bruges, and even Brussels, were giving ear to the tempter; the King's disgraceful abandonment of his friends at Liège seemed to be forgotten.

It was in the Duke's favour that the birth in 1470 of a Dauphin, afterwards Charles VIII, had shattered all the hopes of succession which Charles of Guyenne had hitherto cherished. He was all the more ready to wish for a new League to resist the King's power: the royal advance in the north was also very alarming to the princes.

Moreover, Burgundian interests were rising in England[1]. Edward IV had been reinstated by help of Charles the Bold, to whom he would be bound to give aid in return: the Duke only needed time to see matters take a favourable turn. Charles therefore humbled himself before Louis, and a truce was made at Amiens for three months (10 April, 1471), to the dismay of S. Pol, whose schemes were all frustrated thereby. Amiens and S. Quentin remained, the one in the King's hands, the other in those of S. Pol, who aimed at securing that strong

[1] A brief sketch of English affairs may well be subjoined here.

In 1469 Warwick, with outraged England at his back, imprisoned the Yorkist Edward IV. The red rose of Lancaster, under Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou, seemed likely to revive. But Charles the Bold interfered with a letter addressed to the City of London (so sensitive to its business-connexion with Bruges and Flanders); whereon London declared for Edward IV, and Warwick was fain to release him, and to leave England. This he did, not as a fugitive, but as a great prince, with eighty ships. Calais refused to receive him, and the Burgundians harassed his passage. He landed at Honfleur. Thence he annoyed the Flemish coasts; Charles refused to apologise for having attacked him; and the state of the northern coasts was one of the pretexts for the war of 1470. Louis XI brought Warwick at this time to reconcile himself with Margaret of Anjou and the Lancastrian party, and this union presently (Sept. 1470) led to the overthrow of Edward IV and his flight to Holland. Henry VI was at once restored. Early in 1471 Charles the Bold gave Edward IV means wherewith to return to England; at the battle of Barnet (Easter Day 1471) Warwick fell, and the Lancastrians were routed; at the battle of Tewkesbury (4 May, 1471) Margaret of Anjou and her son were defeated and taken; the lad was murdered. Then Henry VI died suddenly in the Tower. And so perished, at the age of fifty, the man who had unhappily worn the two crowns of France and England, and with him ended the House of Lancaster on the throne. Yorkist Edward IV henceforth held the sceptre in security.

town for himself: the Duke was greatly displeased at losing these two important positions[1].

S. Pol now set himself busily to form a new League: the Duke of Burgundy tried to persuade an assembly of his Estates at Abbeville to give him the means of establishing a standing army like that of France; and they very reluctantly consented: 'for they feared to put themselves into that state of subjection in which, as they saw, the kingdom of France was lying by reason of its soldiers[2].' With these troops to rely on he hoped soon to make head against his slippery foe. He had also another resource—his only daughter, Mary, heiress to all his great possessions. Her he dangled before the eyes of every ambitious prince. She was half-promised to Duke Nicolas of Calabria and Lorraine; then to Philibert of Savoy, a child; then to Maximilian of Austria, whom she eventually married; the price Charles asked in this case being the title of 'Rex Romanorum' for himself, and the hope of succession to the Empire. But in none of these cases, except perhaps the last, was the Duke serious; 'I would sooner turn friar,' he said, 'than give myself a son-in-law!' Nevertheless, at this moment, he actually promised her to the Duke of Guyenne; and this was a match which S. Pol and the Duke of Brittany seemed to wish for: the new League grew very formidable[3]. The King's whole activity was called forth; the old friends of the French monarchy, the Scots, were appealed to for help; the Pope was invoked; Louis instituted the noonday Angelus[4], that men might offer up daily a prayer to God for the King and his cause: messengers hurried hither and thither; the Duke of Guyenne's health was worse, he was like to die. The King made him splendid offers, to stay his hand; but he refused them all: he also offered to

[1] Commines, III. ix. (i. 277). [2] Ibid. III. iii. (i. p. 228).

[3] It was at this time that the Duke made his famous speech 'pour ung Roy qu'il y a je y en vouldroye six.' Commines, III. viii. (i. p. 271).

[4] Jean de Troye describes it, p. 226: 'doresnavant à l'heure de midy, que sonneroit à l'Eglise dudit Paris la grosse cloche, chacun feust fleschy un genoüil à terre, en disant *Ave Maria*, pour donner bonne paix au Royaume de France.'

Charles the Bold terms equal to a great triumph, and the Duke was almost inclined to grasp the present and certain advantage, and hesitated and delayed. That hesitation saved the King: the Duke of Guyenne was failing, had been failing for months; and the King from afar watched his slow decay with a cold eagerness such as surely none but he could feel in a brother's sufferings. He took every step to secure himself, massing troops on the borders of Guyenne, and writing a cruel letter to Dammartin;—'the Duke is dying, and there is no escape for him: . . . . my informant believes that he will not be alive fifteen days hence, do what they may . . . I hear it from the monk who says the Hours with M. de Guyenne, whereat I am much amazed, and have signed myself with the sign of the cross from head to foot[1].' It was thought at the time that the King had caused him to be poisoned: the slow decay of consumption seeming to that age to be an unnatural blight. But the tale of the poisoned peach given to him eight months before, after which he had begun slowly to waste away, is probably a fiction. At last he died in the end of May 1472.

The King's troops entered at once into Guyenne: the Burgundian ambassadors were sent away 'with very meagre words': and Charles the Bold, furious at the failure of his great League, crossed the Somme, burning and ravaging mercilessly as he went. Never had he done so before[2]; it was a sign of the evil days coming on him: his truce with the King had not expired; he broke it without excuse, for he was beginning to believe that his anger might override all honour and all humanity. Near the Somme lies the little town of Nesle; the lava-flood of war reached it, eddied round it, scathed and destroyed it. The inhabitants took refuge in the church, but it availed them nothing; for the Burgundians broke in and slew them all on the sacred floor. The Duke on horseback rode in at the church-door, into 'full half-a-foot of blood from the

[1] Cabinet du Roy Louis XI, p. 67.

[2] Commines, III. ix. (i. p. 275): 'exploict de guerre ort et mauvais, et dont il n'avoit jamais usé.'

poor creatures lying there stark and dead. And when he saw them so, he made the sign of the cross and cried out that it was a right fair sight to see, and that he had with him right good butchers[1].' The evil spirit within him was stirred up to wild joy and exultation.

Thence he passed on to Roye, which submitted; thence to Beauvais, where the burghers, helped by their wives and daughters, resisted with the heroism of despair, and saved themselves. One woman, Jeanne Hachette, was preeminent in her bravery: she took from a Burgundian soldier a standard which he had actually planted on the walls, and rolled back the attack, just when it seemed on the point of success. Louis XI afterwards in gratitude ordained that in the annual procession in memory of the defence, the women of Beauvais should have the place of honour before the men. The town was not prepared for a siege; one of the gates by taking fire at the critical moment of assault seems to have barred the way: the Duke refused to besiege the place in form, insisting on storming it; while he left the south side open, so that troops from Paris soon poured in, and the peril was over. When the final assault took place the Burgundians were beaten back with great disgrace and loss; they broke up the siege. Charles marched towards Normandy, hoping to be joined by the Duke of Brittany; as he went he burnt and ravaged. Before Dieppe he failed; thence he passed to Rouen, where he waited four days under the walls, watched by a vigilant garrison; when the Duke of Brittany still did not appear, he turned back to the north, loudly accusing his friend of broken engagements, and so passed out of the land. He went, and never returned.

The Duke of Brittany's hands had been quite full; it was no fault of his that he did not keep tryst. Louis, following his old policy, had struck swiftly and hard at the weaker antagonist, and after successfully overrunning part of his domains, had offered the frightened Duke fair terms, which he readily accepted. The King had won.

[1] Jean de Troye, p. 232.

Even the Duke of Burgundy recognised the fact: and, weary of this unprofitable war, was minded to turn to fresh fields of conquest. His policy of coalition had crumbled into dust; all the princes of the League were dead or down: he too hastened to make peace. On the 23rd Oct. / 3 Nov., 1472, he signed a truce with the King at Senlis.

Philip of Commines, whose book gives life to this dark age, recognising that the Duke his master had lost all 'sense and malice,' that is, that he listened to no shrewd counsels, cared nothing for intrigue, and followed only his own obstinate anger, foreseeing also that the game was too full of risks in such hands, now watched his opportunity, and made his escape from the Duke's court to the King's[1]. Louis XI, who knew him to be a congenial spirit and a valuable tool, overwhelmed him with gifts and favours[2], and attached him securely to his person. The clever minister of the Duke of Brittany, the Lord of Lescun, Odet d'Aydie, about this same time also deserted to the King. To men such as these success was the goal, and the means might be good or bad, as it chanced. One leading canon of their craft was always 'Detur fortiori,' go with the stronger party. Their appearance at this moment in the court of Louis XI was the sign that his policy had triumphed.

[1] Commines, III. xi. (i. p. 291).

[2] Some of these would now qualify both giver and receiver for transportation. Witness their destruction of the deeds which invalidated the title of Philip of Commines to the Viscount of Thouars' titles and estates.

CHAPTER IV.

Reign of Louis XI, Third Period. The King watches the Downfall of his Rival. A.D. 1473–1477.

Of the two main lines of policy followed by Charles the Bold, the western way of coalition, and the eastern way of consolidation, the former henceforth is almost abandoned, while the latter becomes all-important. It was not so much that Duke Charles ceased to desire the diminution of the King's power as that the wars of the last eight years had taught him that, in spite of all direct attacks, the King was steadily growing stronger and firmer. Therefore he thought it better to concentrate all his efforts on his greater aim, that of consolidating his splendid lordship of the Rhine. Therewith he proposed to hold the Vicar-Generalship of the Empire[1], and then, if possible, to obtain the ancient title of 'King of the Romans[2],' which in its turn should open to him the succession to imperial dignity. For long the empire and the supreme lordship over Germany, the union of the imperial with the German throne[3], had been in the hands of some weak prince, some 'drunken Wenceslaus,' some vain Sigismund, some feeble Frederick III: at last, however, the general change in Europe was beginning to influence Germany; ere long there will be no more weak Emperors, and the House of Austria will prove that the instincts of the Electors lead them to choose the strongest instead of the most insignificant of the candidates for the imperial diadem. Why then

[1] Martin, Histoire de France, vii. p. 79.

[2] The title of Rex Romanorum was understood to be borne by the elected successor to the imperial throne. The title was conferred by the seven electors.

[3] Bryce, Holy Roman Empire, pp 51, 54, 93 (ed. 1864).

should not Charles the Bold have conceived the wish to lead this movement and to become a great Emperor? Why should he not have hoped first to consolidate a splendid dominion, and then to use it as a pedestal whereon to erect his awful figure, as Overlord of the Western World?

For years he had watched carefully over his eastern interests; Alsace and Ferrette, the Sundgau and the Breisgau, on either side of the Rhine near the great bend at Basel, together with the four forest-towns of Waldshut, Straubingen, Lauffenburg, and Rheinfelden, had been placed in his hands, as sureties for a loan, by Duke Sigismund of Austria; in 1470 he had already come into collision with the Swiss, those Germans, as they were then rightly called, who held the upper waters of the great river; and now in 1473 came his first seizure of Lorraine[1], and his unexpected piece of good fortune in Gelderland. The old Duke of that district, grateful for his help against an undutiful son, bequeathed to him that important duchy as well as the county of Zutphen. These gave to Charles complete command of the Rhine-mouths; while Alsace and the Breisgau secured the middle course of the river. Why should he not connect these territories and become lord of all that historic stream, with its ancient traditions of empire, its ever-rolling roadway of wealth, its high-perched castles and venerable cities? To this day the very name of the Rhine is as magic to the German; then even more than now the river was the backbone of the prosperity and life of Germany. This grand prize Charles the Bold now thought to secure to himself.

And first, before moving further in his career of conquest, he would see what he could get from the Emperor; in this same year (A.D. 1473) he held his famous interview at Treves with Frederick III. The Duke's splendour, his pride, his great demands, his ill-faith respecting his daughter's hand, above all, the busy intrigues of Louis, by offending and frightening the

[1] The early death of John the young Duke of Calabria, who left as his heir René, son of the Count of Vaudemont, gave Charles an opportunity of seizing Lorraine.

Emperor, indisposed him to make any concessions. At last Frederick suddenly and secretly quitted the city, leaving behind him a message for Duke Charles, to the effect that the affair could be better dealt with at a more convenient season. The Duke of Burgundy, surprised and enraged, at once turned his attention to schemes of conquest. He spent the winter-months in his newly-acquired lands, Alsace, Lorraine, and the duchy and county of Burgundy. At Nanci he bore himself as master and lord, and is said to have hinted to the citizens that the chief town of Lorraine would ere long become the capital of a far wider dominion. Thence he passed into Alsace; there and in the Breisgau the inhabitants had laid before him their complaints against Peter of Hagenbach, his brutal and tyrannous agent, whose government of these provinces had been almost unendurable. The Duke haughtily supported his lieutenant in all his enormities; the natives could only weep and wait. Not long, for their day of vengeance was near. Thence he passed into the Burgundies, and on this his first visit went through the feudal ceremony proper to the occasion; at the gate of the Abbey of S. Benigne of Dijon he was met by the abbot, who placed a valuable ring on his finger, and espoused him to his fair duchy of Burgundy[1]. At this time he also harangued his Estates of the duchy and county, reminding them that of old they had been parts of an independent state: he seemed to hint at the union of the old Lotharingian kingdom with that of the Burgundies, and perhaps even with the adjoining inheritance of the House of Savoy. This would have formed an enormous and unwieldy kingdom, long, narrow, and ill-connected, half encircling France, and comprising some of the fairest provinces of Germany. Just behind the weakest point of this great arch of states lay the Swiss mountains, the home of freemen, who, when their time came, ruthlessly dispelled this splendid dream, and showed that the borderlands between France and Germany were not capable of permanent coherence or of a solid national life.

[1] Olivier de la Marche, Coll. Univ. ix. p. 231.

Negociation with the Emperor having failed, Charles determined to carry his point by force. A little before this, Robert of Bavaria, Archbishop-Elector of Cologne, as odious to the burghers of that city as the Bishop of Liège had been to the men of Liège, had named Charles protector of his Electorate. Under pretext of this protectorate, in defiance of Pope, Emperor, the German princes, the city itself, Charles came down to the Rhine, and laid vigorous siege to the little town of Neuss, which lies below Cologne, also on the left bank of the Rhine; it was a fortified place, naturally strong, situated near the junction of the Erft with the main stream. It dominated the Rhine, and on it depended the victualling of the electoral city: were it to fall into the hands of Charles, then Cologne might be reduced, and all the middle Rhine[1]. That great river would then from mouth to source be the frontier of his dominions; nor would he be without a foothold on the other bank. For this he even set aside for a time all thought of repairing the losses he had suffered in Alsace and the Breisgau, of which he had but just received the tidings. Sigismund had lately sent him two hundred thousand florins for the ransom of Alsace; the Alsatians, overjoyed, at once had claimed their freedom, had captured Hagenbach, the Duke's brutal agent, and had carried him to Breisach, where he was speedily tried, condemned, and beheaded.

Men knew that with Charles 'town gained' meant 'town destroyed,' and Neuss accordingly made stubborn defence. Slowly the whole fighting power of Germany came down; part, under the Bishop of Münster and others, lay on the right bank of the Rhine, over against the town; the Emperor Frederick himself with a vast host filled up the triangle between the Rhine and the Erft. The place could be neither starved nor stormed; and the Burgundians, who lay in a great permanent camp,

[1] Commines, IV. i. (i. p. 312): 'S'il eust prins Nuz, la garnir bien, et une aultre place ou deux audessus de Coulogne, parquoy ladicte cité diroit le mot; et que partant il monteroit contremont le Rin jusques à la conté de Ferrete, qu'il tenoit lors; et ainsi tout le Rin seroit sien, jusques en Hollande; où il fine.'

which was like a town, full of hostelries and all manner of jollities, waited tediously eleven months in hopes of the surrender of this little place. The Duke from time to time renewed his truce with Louis XI.

Just before leaving Flanders the Duke had begged English Edward IV to come over with an army and attack the French King, promising to return from the Rhine and join him as soon as he landed; for he doubtless thought, in his sanguine temper, that the siege of Neuss would last but a little space. Edward was willing; his Parliament granted him the required supplies, and a large force was collected[1], strong in appearance, in fact undisciplined; for the miserable civil wars had ruined all the old skill of the English bowmen and foot-soldiers. It was also arranged that three thousand English should land in Brittany, to raise that duchy and embarrass the French from two sides. Charles had wished the English to land at Harfleur or at La Hogue, as their kings had done before[2]: they would then have the Duke of Brittany on their right, and himself on their left; so that all three might make a grand converging attack on Paris. It was a renewal of the old plan, for which the Duke had struggled so hard, when he tried to secure Normandy for Charles of Berry.

Edward IV made preparations for a year; and during almost all the time Duke Charles was wasting his great power at Neuss. Nothing could stir him from his obstinate siege. The Pope sent a legate to pray him to make peace; the Emperor offered favourable terms; the King of Denmark came and wished to mediate, the English King called him to come back and join him according to the agreement made. All was in vain; week after week he stubbornly held on. The Swiss and Swabians, emboldened by the unpunished revolt of Alsace, penetrated as far as Hericaut, near Belfort, and there defeated the Bastard of Burgundy; Franche Comté lay defenceless before them: yet the Duke would not move. News came that Sigismund of

[1] Commines, IV. ii. (i. p. 316).

[2] See a letter by the Duke, cited in Mdlle. Dupont's Commines, i. pp. 335, 336, note.

Austria had made a league with the Swiss and with the cities of the Upper Rhine and some of the princes of that neighbourhood[1]:—so far from their natural course had the Duke's violence driven them; the old foes, forgetting their feuds, united heartily to repel their new and cruel enemy. The King of France supported them underhand, while he also renewed his truce with Charles the Bold. Louis, in October 1474, sent an embassy to Lucerne, of which the immediate result was the Swiss declaration of war against Charles.

Only at last, when Neuss was all but worn out, did the Duke consent to withdraw on terms: the place was to be put into the hands of the Pope's legate, and the dispute as to the Archbishopric of Cologne referred to the Pope; the Emperor abandoned the League of the Upper Rhine, and made peace with Charles. The siege had lasted eleven months; the Duke gave out that he was returning in triumph, that all had gone well. On the contrary, the delay had been his ruin. Occasion, inexorable deity, had turned her face from him: he had outstayed his own fortunes. His army was so disorganised that it could not be brought down to join the English. Edward, landing at Calais, against the Duke's wish, found no Burgundians awaiting him; nor was he well pleased when, after much delay, the Duke, almost alone, rode into his camp, and announced that he had changed his plans, and was preparing to enter France through Lorraine, while he suggested that the English should pass through the northern districts, and join him under the walls of Paris. He assured King Edward that he had a good understanding with S. Pol, who had promised to deliver up the frontier-fortresses: and on this assurance Edward moved forwards. But when he presented himself before the fortresses, the Constable answered through the cannon's mouth. Disgusted, finding his troops restive, and the merchants, whom he had

[1] This league was made at Constance. Its members were the Duke Sigismund, the Bishops of Basel and Strasburg, the Margrave of Baden, the city of Basel, the free cities of Alsace (viz. Strasburg, Colmar, Hagenau, Schelestadt, Mulhausen), and lastly, the Swiss. Commines, V. i. (ii. pp. 2, 5). He calls the Swiss 'ces vieilles ligues d'Allemaigne qu'on appelle Suisses.'

brought over, weary of the whole thing, and feeling himself slighted by the Duke of Burgundy, he lent a ready ear to proposals which came from Louis. The 'traffic-truce,' 'la trève marchande,' as it was called, was quickly agreed on: Louis bought off his burly opponent with seventy-two thousand crowns in cash, with a promise of marriage between the Dauphin and the eldest daughter of Edward I[1], with Guyenne as her dowry, or fifty thousand crowns a year for nine years. The Duke of Burgundy rode over in great heat and haste to prevent it, but he was too late; peace for nine years had been signed between France and England. The two kings afterwards met, with every mark of friendship, on Pecquigny bridge.

Charles the Bold dissembled his anger, and renewed his truce with Louis. Both knew that it was hollow, but each thought it to his own interest not to break with the other. Charles hoped first to settle matters in Lorraine, Alsace, and Switzerland; Louis was only too willing to see his formidable antagonist turn another way. He treated the Lorrainers as he had treated the men of Liège; for he abandoned the cause of poor Duke René, whom he had tempted to declare war on Charles. Lorraine was speedily overrun by the Burgundians and subdued; Nanci was taken (Nov. 30, 1475).

Early in 1476 the Duke, marching into Switzerland, laid siege to the little town of Granson on the Lake of Neufchatel. The citizens defended themselves bravely: at last, being in desperate case, they listened to assurances of the Duke's clemency, and capitulated: whereon Charles hung or drowned them all. This terrible deed was singularly and speedily avenged. The Swiss rose against him, and caught him still close to Granson. As they came up a strange panic seized the Burgundians, and they fled headlong; it was an amazing rout, only seven men-at-arms being killed. The Duke's camp and all his treasures fell into the hands of the simple mountaineers, who knew nothing of

[1] Elizabeth of England however never married Charles VIII of France. Commines' account of the whole affair is sarcastic and amusing; he had a keen eye for the weak points of our ancestors. IV. ch. vii–x.

their value. Priceless stones, which now grace the diadems of kings, were carelessly passed from hand to hand; silver dishes were thought to be made of tin; the Duke's sword, his collar of the Fleece of Gold, the plate belonging to his chapel—all were taken. The rout and disgrace were complete. It was, however, a check rather than an overthrow; the Duke's power was not destroyed: he retired to Lausanne and there gathered fresh forces. With these he marched out again, intending to lay siege to Bern. The way was to be from Morat to Freiburg, from Freiburg to Bern. But the little town of Morat was garrisoned by dauntless men, who held the Duke in check, while Alsatians, Lorrainers, Germans from Austria and the Breisgau, gathered in force, together with a great levy of Swiss. On June 21, 1476, was fought the murderous battle of Morat, the ruin of the Burgundian power. The Duke, who despised his foe, and cared nothing for strategy, made no preparation against the coming attack; the allies seized the higher ground, hemmed him in, broke his army, drove it into the lake. Charles himself scarcely escaped, and the ruin seemed complete. As soon as he could collect an army out of the remnants of his power, he hastened to Nanci. He had marked out that city as his future capital; it was destined to be his grave. René of Lorraine had been too quick for him, and was already within its walls. Winter was at hand, the Duke was still outside; his foes redoubled their efforts. René, who had left the town to collect forces for its rescue, whilst it defended itself, speedily returned with twenty thousand men. Charles had only four thousand, and felt himself surrounded by treachery. Campobasso, his chief leader of mercenaries, deserted him at this critical time. Still the obstinate and desperate man would neither yield nor withdraw; he would fight, he said, 'even if he must fight alone.' On the 4th of January, 1477, he fell grimly on his foes, determined to conquer or to die. They were too strong for him; his little army melted away; the Swiss closed in upon him for the last time. Not till the next day did a page recognise his body as it lay in a swamp, stark-naked, frozen,

covered with wounds. They took it up, and carried it into Nanci, and held over it solemn rites of burial. Duke René, whom he had so much wronged, acted as chief mourner, wearing a long mourning-robe, and 'a great beard of gold, which came down to his waist' after the manner of ancient heroes, when they have won victories[1]. 'God have thy soul,' he said, as he gazed on the corpse lying in state; 'thou hast caused me much evil and many sorrows.' Thereon he sprinkled the bed with holy water and departed[2].

[1] Cabinet du Roy Louis XI, p. 85.
[2] Jean de Troye, p. 357.

CHAPTER V.

Reign of Louis XI, Fourth Period. The King Triumphant and Miserable. A.D. 1477–1483.

Tidings of the death of Charles the Bold soon reached the King by the posts which he had established in 1464. At first it was but a doubtful rumour; some said the Duke was dead, some that he had escaped. But as messenger after messenger came in, it was seen that the news was true[1].

Three marked days of happiness Louis had enjoyed in life; the first when he heard that his father was dead, and that he was no longer an exile but King of France; the second, when, after long and anxious watching, he learnt that his brother, the Duke of Guyenne, had succumbed to his tedious malady, and by dying had spoilt all the plans of the League of Princes; the third, this day on which news came that his terrible foe, Duke Charles the Bold, lay dead in a ditch at Nanci. On this last day the King 'was so much surprised with joy that scarcely could he contain his countenance[2].' His courtiers were not so much delighted: Commines noted their behaviour with a malicious pleasure. The King sent to the captains and other chief men at Tours, 'and all made show of great joy, but those who looked closely' (with the eyes of a shrewd observer) 'could see that there were many who did but feign .... They greatly feared[3] the King, and thought he would make changes, and take away places and offices; for many had been against

[1] Commines, V. x (ii. p. 70).
[2] Ibid. (ii. p. 71).
[3] Mdlle. Dupont here reads 'craint,' not 'craintif,' and rightly.

him in the days of the Public Weal, or in the affairs of the Duke of Guyenne . . . Then came dinner, and they ate with him, as they had often done, but I and others watched how they dined, and with what appetite: and of a truth (whether from joy or sadness I say not) not one of them seemed to eat the half of his wonted share[1].'

And thus at the Court of the French King they mourned for the great Duke Charles.

While Charles had been attacking Germany and Switzerland, leaving France at peace, Louis had not been idle. Heavy taxes and small outgoings had set his exchequer straight; he had also dealt with the ill-affected Houses, one by one, and brought them down. First, he fell on the House of Alençon; John, head of that family, whom Charles VII had condemned and Louis had released, had shown his gratitude by joining the League of 1465; he was now seized and tried. He died in prison, and his son René, a weaker man, after ineffectual struggles and much harsh treatment, was also imprisoned for life. Next fell the grand historic House of Armagnac: the last Count, a turbulent disorderly soldier, had also been pardoned by Louis, and he too had turned on his benefactor. Against him the terrible Cardinal of Albi was sent (A.D. 1473). He defended himself in Lectoure; but the warlike Prelate took the town; the Count was put to death before his wife's eyes, and then she was poisoned in cold blood. In 1474 the rich province of Roussillon was secured: the king had treated another of the Armagnacs, and a member of the House of Albret, with swift severity; the nobles of Roussillon, believing that the King of Aragon would support them, then revolted against the far-off French. But the King's arm was long: Perpignan fell, the province submitted; the northern slopes of the Pyrenees were secured against Spain.

The most remarkable incident of the series was the fall of the Count of S. Pol, Constable of France, who, standing as he did between three great powers, England, France, and Burgundy,

[1] Commines, V. x (ii. p. 73).

had tried by every art of intrigue to balance himself, to increase his power and domain, and to carve out an independent principality. But a man cannot always be balancing, and at last S. Pol roused the hatred of both Louis and Charles. Agreed in nothing else, these two princes were of one mind as to him; Charles, who had him in his power, readily abandoned him to the King, on condition that Louis would not defend René of Lorraine. He was handed over to the Admiral of France, and, among others, to the Lord of S. Pierre, whence the courtier-wits said that there was war in Paradise, and that S. Peter had taken S. Paul[1]. The King had the pleasure of seeing his grim joke[2] practically carried out; the Constable was beheaded at Paris in 1475.

The Duke of Nemours, head of a younger branch of the Armagnacs, had also in 1475 refused to help the King; he had designs on Languedoc, if the King succumbed. In 1476 he was seized, imprisoned, and finally executed, not without suspicion of torture.

These were the chief blows struck; each fell true and heavy on some leading spirit among the King's princely antagonists. Others he won over; the Houses of Bourbon, Anjou, Orleans, learnt, one way or other, that it was their best policy to acquiesce in the King's supremacy. Brittany stood out alone; but even Brittany was much weakened and straitened; the King had allured away the most capable men from the Breton court, and made them his by gifts and honours.

So stood matters, when the fall of that 'so great and sumptuous an edifice,' 'that mighty House, which had sustained and nurtured so many worthy men, and had been so much honoured afar and near[3],' called the King to fresh and bolder action. The heiress of the wide domains of the House of Burgundy was a maiden of twenty years:—how could she defend herself?

[1] Cabinet du Roy Louis XI, p. 82. See also the pleasantry in Molinet (Buchon, XLI. p. liv.).

[2] 'Sa tête, bien entendu, sans son corps.' Commines, IV. xi. (i. p. 384).

[3] Commines, V. ix. (ii. p. 69).

Her territories were too wide-spread: Ghent was already in agitation; clearly she must find the strong arm of a husband to help her. Whom then should she choose? She who had been held out as a prize to so many princes by her father, even when he loathed the idea of giving her to any man, was now driven by necessity to choose a husband for herself.

Louis XI deliberated whether he should compel her to marry the poor little Dauphin Charles, or at once declare war on her, snatching from her as much of her inheritance as he could; or thirdly, whether he should only claim as his, by right of devolution, the districts the Duke had held of the Crown[1]. There being no male heir, these might be treated as fiefs resumed by their sovereign lord.

In the main the King chose the third course, though he did not give up all thought of the marriage, and would not have refused, if need were, to make aggressive war on the Duchess Mary.

The Estates of the Duchy of Burgundy at once recognised the King as their liege lord. The Parliament of Beaune, the 'Great Days of Burgundy,' remained as a sovereign court of law; and the Chamber of Accounts at Dijon was left untouched; the Duchy itself returned to the Crown, once and for ever. Nor did Franche Comté resist, though the King had no such clear rights there, for the County was under the Empire, Germanic not French. But he claimed it on some shadowy grounds, such as that he expected that 'Mademoiselle of Burgundy' would shortly be betrothed to the Dauphin. Any excuse was enough for the stronger; the County was taken; here again the local Parliament was not interfered with.

In Picardy the King was welcome; the long-desired towns on the Somme opened their gates at once: he was tempted to push on, so easy had been his course. A politic embassy allayed the rising jealousy of England; the French arms moved

[1] i. e. Northern Picardy, Duchy of Burgundy, Walloon Flanders (Lille, Douai, etc.). Cp. Martin, Histoire des Français, vii. p. 120.

forward with a vigour that had an element of cruelty in it, sweeping northwards as far as Boulogne and Arras. Flanders was threatened, Hainault entered; but though Avesnes fell, Valenciennes defended herself well, and the King did not dare to go on to Brussels. Arras, which was restive under the French yoke, and revolted when the tide of fortune turned against the King, was treated with great severity; the destruction of the city was ordered; it was bombarded, walls rased, population expelled, the very name of the place changed to 'Franchise[1]'; and Louis repeopled it by a kind of pressgang of artisans from the good towns of the kingdom. Troubles broke out at Ghent, the Flemish towns, as often before, desiring to take advantage of the weak hand of their new ruler, and to recover their rights. Mary, betrayed by Louis, who let the men of Ghent know how she was dealing with him, had the supreme mortification of supplicating, bare-headed and in vain, for the lives of her two ministers, who had been the channels of communication with the King. The citizens of Ghent slew them, and their death made an alliance with the Dauphin impossible. How could she stoop to one who had betrayed her, and brought her to such a painful and humiliating scene? The men of Ghent wished her to marry that Adolf of Gelderland, who had treated his father so ill; but she would have none of him: why should she take their nominee? At last she offered her hand to Maximilian of Austria, to whom, at her father's bidding, some years back, she had written a letter and sent a ring, as to one likely to be her favoured suitor. His praises, as the most knightly, handsome, and courteous youth in Christendom, she had heard when the Duke came back from his bootless visit to Trèves[2].

[1] So, after her revolt in 1793, Lyons was cruelly punished by the Convention, and a decree passed that her name should be abolished and replaced by that of 'Commune-affranchi.'

[2] The chief suitors of Mary of Burgundy were seven in all:—
1. Charles the Dauphin of France.
2. The son of the Duke of Cleves.
3. The young Lord of Ravenstein.

The marriage took place at once; on the 27th of May, 1477, the lands of the House of Burgundy passed over to the House of Austria. No marriage has ever had such eventful consequences; all Europe felt for centuries the effects of it: the new system of politics, the new relations and modifications of states, the secular rivalry of France and Austria, the establishment of the Balance of Power, all these things are closely connected with this great event.

The first result was the arrest of the forward movement of French aggrandisement. Louis felt that, safe as he was at home, his newly-acquired districts were dissatisfied and menacing; to go on with the war might be to lose all. He considered that the hostility of Maximilian might draw endless disasters on him: he remembered how wisely Commines had advised him to leave Charles the Bold to 'break his head against Germany,'—Germany, so vast and strong that Charles would be sure to ruin himself if he attacked her; he remembered also how the event had set its seal to that advice; —and should he now reverse the policy of that time? So he asked and obtained a truce from Maximilian; he also made peace with the English King. But the truce was a hollow one; both sides preparing for war. In face of the threatening aspect of the Flemish, Louis negociated, agreed to evacuate Hainault, Cambrai, Franche Comté, keeping the Duchy of Burgundy, the Somme towns, and Artois. Negociations for a solid peace ensued, and for a while seemed to be serious.

At this time Louis appears to have felt that his father's system of 'free archers' might have too much independence in it. He suspected his captains, deprived several of their commands, organised a large mercenary force, and allied himself closely with the Swiss, who were now coming forward as the new

4. Duke Adolf of Gelderland.
5. The Duke of Clarence.
6. Lord Rivers, Edward IV's son-in-law.
7. Maximilian of Austria.

Also at early times many others, such as the two Dukes of Calabria, John and Nicolas of Anjou.

fighting power of Europe. Six thousand mountaineers entered France at his request—he could not trust his native levies—and were set to reduce Franche Comté; all thought of a solid peace with Maximilian vanished. The County was sternly ravaged; Dôle and Besançon, its strong places, were taken, and the fief wrested from the Empire for a while.

Again Louis marched into Artois, retook Arras, horribly punishing the town for the insults hurled at him from the walls. Maximilian also came out and besieged Therouenne; and the French advancing to relieve the place, the two armies came into collision at Guinegate[1], about a league south of Therouenne (A.D. 1479). The French were the stronger in cavalry, the Archduke in foot-soldiers. A prudent general in such a case would have declined to fight, or if obliged would have carefully supported his weak arm with the strong, by keeping his horse close to his infantry. But Crevecœur, who commanded the French, one of the many nobles who had passed over from Duke Charles to the King, did neither one nor other. He had none of the experience and caution of the older captains whom Louis had set aside; he was only eager to break a lance with his old Flemish comrades. He saw that their horse were few compared with his, and, without a moment's thought, charged in among them. Down they went before him; the broken remainder turned and fled. Crevecœur, forgetful of all the rest, eagerly pursued; the flying cavalry drew him far from the battle-field. Meanwhile, the French footmen, the 'free-archers,' left without a general, charged up against the Flemish pikemen, and they, encouraged by young Maximilian, who showed heroic qualities in this his first battle, resisted steadily. The French garrison of Therouenne, which had sallied forth to take the Archduke in the rear, passing near the Flemish camp, turned aside to plunder; and a diversion, which would probably have decided the day, was thus arrested at the critical moment. The free-archers, hearing rumours of booty, thought little of fighting and much of spoil. Then the Count of Romont retook from

[1] Scene also of the 'Battle of the Spurs,' A.D. 1513.

the French the Flemish artillery, and the King's troops broke and fled. When Crevecœur came back flushed with the triumph of his senseless pursuit, the battle was already lost; he was obliged to gallop off and escape as he might. Though Maximilian remained master of the field, his forces were so much crippled that he raised the seige of Therouenne and withdrew into Flanders.

Once more the undisciplined vivacity of the French men-at-arms had ruined their cause, whilst the punishment fell not on them but on the free-archers. Louis XI, in great anger, ordered that pillage should for the future be strictly forbidden; and that prisoners and booty should be divided fairly and equally. After this the war languished; here and there a town was taken or lost. Early in 1480 a truce for a year and seven months was agreed to.

The battle of Guinegate, the last that Louis fought, was also the end of the system of free-archers. The King ordered that henceforth the towns should contribute money, not men; and the money went to hire those foreign mercenaries who, the proverbial stay and support of tyranny, marked the advance of absolutism in France.

A time of peace now came for weary France, but not a time of rest. The King cherished many fair schemes for her good, as we are told by Commines; but all in vain; they came to naught. The belief that repression might beget autocracy, and that autocracy should then cause all blessings to flow down on the people, was not new in the days of Louis XI, and is not old now. But it had its usual fortunes. Heavy taxation, corrupt officials, and a depressed and degraded public spirit, made it impossible for Louis to carry out his benevolent schemes. On his deathbed he sighed for a few more years of life, in which to give peace and happiness to his country: this too is no unusual delusion. A man must do his work while it is day; he cannot atone for a barren past by sighing after an impossible future. In these last years of the sad King's life, and they were 'few and evil,' his power to do good had passed from him. In wretched health,

distrusted, suspicious, embittered by suffering, Louis XI dragged on a sad existence.

Yet even then he busily gathered in the rich harvest of his long reign; these dark days of his life are, by striking contrast, the days of his success and triumph. In 1480 he annexed to the Crown, on the death of the old King René[1], the two great districts of Anjou and Provence; Anjou, important because it stretched from the flank of Brittany into the very vitals of the kingdom, and was the home of that far-reaching ambitious family which had so many claims on Italy, Lorraine, and the lower Rhone; and Provence, because it was a fief of the Empire, the second which Louis had wrested out of the infirm hands of Frederick III.

But one scene more, and we shall bid farewell to Louis. During these last years he had withdrawn almost entirely from the world, shut up in his chosen home, the castle of Plessis-lez-Tours. Here he was seen by few; he was consumed with suspicions. He changed all his servants, and that frequently: the old ones he did not entirely dismiss, but sent them to look to the offices which he had given them in different parts of the kingdom. At this time he did many strange things, so that men deemed him mad; but, says Commines, they did not know him at all. He kept round him none except his domestics and four hundred archers of his guard. No lord, no prince, no grandee, was allowed to come near him, except Peter of Beaujeu, afterwards Duke of Bourbon, who had married his daughter Anne, the true successor of the King in character and intellect.

All round the castle of Plessis ran a moat, with a trellis of iron-bars on the outer bank: fastened to the walls on the inner side of the moat were iron spits, each many-pointed, forming a kind of chevaux-de-frise. At the four angles of the building were four turrets of iron[2], thick and strong, so placed that men

[1] Margaret of Anjou, heiress to these districts, had transferred her rights to Louis, in gratitude for her rescue from captivity in England.

[2] 'Quatre moyneaulx de fer.' Commines, VI. xi. (ii. p. 67).

could shoot from them with advantage; and ten arbalest-men were set in each, to watch for and to shoot any who might draw near before the opening of the gate. At eight o'clock in the morning the drawbridge was lowered, and the officers came in, and set the watch, just as if the place had been a frontier-fortress needing special vigilance. No stranger might enter, save by the wicket, and only with the King's leave. It was in fact a close and gloomy prison to which Louis had condemned himself; he had only a narrow court to walk in, yet thither he seldom went, but wandered up and down his gallery, through his rooms, and went to mass in the chapel without passing into the open air; he seemed to dread even the windows that looked down on him from the inner walls of the castle. Thus he lived, a 'walking skeleton[1],' 'looking more like a dead man than a living, so meagre was he, that no one could have believed it[2].' To add to the contrast he now wore splendid raiment of furs and velvet. A feverish activity also possessed him: he seemed eager to prove to the world that he was still alive. To England he sent an embassy to negociate a marriage, with splendid gifts; to Spain he would send to buy a good horse or a mule at any price; dogs he sought from every quarter, Spain, Brittany, or Valence sent them; in Sicily he heard of a splendid mule, and bought it for twice its worth; at Naples he purchased horses: from all parts of the world came strange beasts: from Barbary little ponies, from Denmark and Sweden the elk and reindeer[3].

He also gathered to him many other strange beings, hermits, saints, physicians, magicians: each with his nostrum to cure the King, each as helpless as the other. One last delight he had: for in 1482 news reached him that Mary of Burgundy, in the very bloom and sweetness of her young married life, had been

[1] Pierre Mathieu calls him 'une anatomie cheminante.'

[2] Commines, VI. vii. (ii. p. 232).

[3] Commines, VI. vii. (ii. p. 233): 'L'une s'appelloit *Helles*, et sont de corsaige de cerfz, grans comme buffles, les cornes courtes et grosses: les aultres s'appelloient *Rangies*, qui sont de corsaige et de couleur de dain sauf qu'elles ont les cornes beaucoup plus grandes.'

thrown from her horse, and grievously hurt, and had died at Bruges, leaving two infants, Philip, afterwards called the Handsome, who became the link between Spain and the Austro-Burgundian power; and a little Margaret. 'The King,' says Commines, 'told me the news, and was greatly rejoiced thereat[1].' He thought it would turn to his profit—one is glad to know that he was disappointed. Maximilian, he said, was young; his father the Emperor lived still, and was 'exceeding niggardly;' war was threatening him all round; he was a foreigner on Flemish soil and but poorly accompanied. Surely the stars shone on France, and she would profit by her neighbour's weakness and mishap.

Lastly, in the end of 1482, Louis made firm peace with Maximilian at Arras. It was agreed that the Dauphin Charles should espouse his daughter Margaret, a child of three years, who should bring with her Artois, Franche Comté, Macon, Auxerre, Salins, Bar-sur-Seine, and Noyers; while in return the King renounced his claims on Walloon Flanders. Thus in the end he seemed to see his great acquisitions firmly secured to the Crown. The little Margaret was taken into France to be brought up as the Dauphin's bride-elect: the wedding, however, never took place.

This Peace of Arras, the third within the century[2], forms an epoch in French history. It ended the struggle for the frontier-line to the north of France; it was the last act of sovereign feudalism; it was the first telling blow struck at the great Burgundian aggregation of states.

So passed the last years of this remarkable reign. The King fought long and hard against death; but the dark spectre would not be denied. Louis had strictly forbidden his courtiers to breathe the name of death; he thought the very word would kill him. They were only to say 'Speak little' and 'Confess,'

[1] Commines, VI. vi. (ii. p. 223).

[2] (1) A.D. 1414, made by Charles VI to reconcile the Burgundians and Armagnacs.
(2) A.D. 1435, by Charles VII and Philip the Good, to close the Burgundian struggle against France.
(3) A.D. 1482, to settle the points at issue between France and the Burgundian House.

when they knew that he must die. For all that, they used no such soft speech, but told him plainly death was coming. Then the higher nature in him revived, and he bore himself patiently and wisely to the end, never complaining, though his sufferings were great, and attending devoutly to the last offices of the Church. He thought much of the state of his wretched country, 'had God but given me a few more years, I would have set the state in order,' was one of his very last utterances.

His son Charles was called to his bedside: for several years the King had not even seen him, but had left him uneducated, a kind of state-prisoner, helpless, and deformed. The father's last words of advice to him were wise and good: he begged him to give the land rest, for 'it was very lean and poor,' not to attack Calais or vex the English, and to avoid all quarrel with Francis, Duke of Brittany; to keep the peace right and left, till he came of age.

At the last Louis suffered but little; his mind was clear; he passed away tranquilly, conversing to the end with those around his bed. He died on the last day of August, a Saturday (as he had wished)[1], in the year 1483, at the age of sixty-one.

He died, leaving France still sunk in darkness and distress. There she sat, one of the fairest of the European nations, oppressed and a captive, while all around her the world was being touched with the light of the new day now breaking over Europe. The literary life of Italy, even of Germany, had scarcely affected her; the annals of learning are a blank for France during the reign of Louis XI. Like men who sleep through the sweet morning-hours, when spring is passing into summer, France lay dormant, unconscious of the day.

We need not review the character of Louis; it is written in every act of his long reign. It only remains to sum up the political results. French historians strongly insist on the great things his policy achieved for France. Things great they

[1] Commines, XI. (ii. p. 270).

were, but also disastrous. In his reign healthy political action, constitutional progress, the balance of elements in the state, became impossible. Not between liberty and privilege, but between privilege and absolutism, is henceforth the sole remaining struggle. This debate lingered on till the end of the eighteenth century: when, in a blaze of military splendour, a new autocratic power burnt up both monarchy and privilege.

Louis XI was the first of French kings who showed the disastrous influences of Italian ideas on the Gallic nature. He imbibed Italian political maxims, and put them in practice. He was very desirous to learn the Venetian and Florentine laws. Francesco Sforza taught him much; two Venetians whom he invited to Paris 'with great mystery[1],' taught him still more. From them came much of that cynicism which marks the King and the age. Louis had no scruples; he could bribe, or flatter and cozen; he was one of the first among princes who understood something of electioneering arts, though his processes were comparatively simple. When he had bought his instruments, he used them as one uses help purchased: and did not commit the error of giving them the claims and inconvenient position of real friends.

We must give full credit to Louis as an administrator. His was an unwearied industry, exactitude, and justice bordering on severity, in all things pertaining to law or finance; he was liberal towards churches and cloisters, and also in founding and endowing hospitals; he favoured the universities, specially that of Paris: he founded that of Bourges (A.D. 1465): he allowed the press to be set up in the Sorbonne (A.D. 1469); where many books were forthwith printed: he was anxious to promote good government among his people. He declared himself most eager to reform the morals of his clergy, and compelled them to make returns of their wealth. His tendencies were no doubt towards rigour; nor was he nice in his acts: yet their general bearing was in many ways favourable to the advance of his kingdom.

[1] G. Chastellain, p. 196.

He worked on the lines of his father's policy: Charles VII had imposed taxes at will [1], and had engaged some few men-at-arms as paid soldiers. When he died the taxation had reached eighteen hundred thousand francs; and there were seventeen hundred men-at-arms of the Ordonnances. When Louis XI died, the yearly levy was more than doubled, and amounted to four million seven hundred thousand francs; and he had between four and five thousand men-at-arms as well as some twenty-five thousand foot.

And besides money and a standing army he had other tools. He was 'a natural friend to men of middle condition, a foe to every great man who could be independent of him [2].' Commines, who faithfully mirrors his master's character, had also a sovereign contempt for the feudal lords of the day, and draws their ignorant arrogance with a sarcastic pen. The King, against all the old ideas of 'noble land and noble man,' gave fiefs to burghers, encouraged the cities, supported them against the feudal lords [3]: he allowed a kind of French Hansa to grow up in Paris; he was careful for commerce and industry; he founded the silk manufacture, and thereby gave its first impulse to the richest modern industry of France. The cities did not love him well; yet he treated them better than any other order in the state. Throughout his life he fought against the two classes of lords, the old feudal nobles, and the 'lords of the lilies': with him apanages, that fruitful source of weakness, ceased. He did all he could to centralise the administration of the realm: early in the reign he had established the posts, quickening communication between point and point. He traversed the kingdom again and again till near the end of his life: 'it was amazing to see him so meagre and exhausted, but his great heart bore him up [4].' He used the Three Estates only when he needed them to help him in saving some portion of the kingdom; but to their rights, claims, and grievances he paid

[1] Commines (ii. p. 65). [2] Commines, I. x. (i. p. 84).
[3] Martin, Histoire des Français, vii. p. 144, note 2.
[4] Commines, VI. vi. (ii. p. 222).

little heed: when the central power appeared to him to be strong enough to permit some counterpoise, he encouraged the growth of the different provincial Estates; they met in many parts of France, even in Normandy and Languedoc, where they might have seemed to be a danger to his supreme authority. The same is true of the local parliaments; they were maintained and favoured: local customs were often confirmed, larger jurisdictions granted, judges declared to be permanent. The King doubtless reckoned that the result of strengthened local institutions must be the enfeebling of all the central resistance to the royal power. But at any rate the course of his policy was wise and prudent, and ought to be remembered to his credit. In connexion with this it may be noted that he made France, as she has been ever since, the chosen land of officials, securing a safe and harmless career for the upper classes of citizens. 'France had more legal and financial offices than all the rest of Christendom[1].' His ordinances show great administrative power; they are numerous, thorough, minute: he wished his hand to appear in everything, and to give to his power the semblance of ubiquity.

With persistent policy he weakened, and, where he could, destroyed, those princes and lords who resisted the centralisation of the kingdom: the tall heads in the field of France fell one by one; and ere Louis died his weary eyes gazed on a kingdom, monotonous and far-stretching, whence all that was high and characteristic was gone. In dealing with the great lords Louis had followed two chief lines of policy, that of repression and that of absorption: he either made his antagonists powerless, by holding them down, and sometimes by destroying them, or he succeeded in drawing their territories into his own hands. The fall of the House of Armagnac is a striking example of the first process; the annexation of Anjou fairly represents the second.

The net result of the reign was that while France grew larger, she also became more compact. At the beginning Louis had

[1] L. von Ranke, Französische Geschichte, i. p. 66 (ed. 1868).

been hemmed in by half-hostile neighbours, and could scarcely call himself master a hundred miles from the capital; at the end of it he had added to the Crown the northern parts of Picardy, Artois, the Duchy of Burgundy, Franche Comté, though only for a time, Provence, Roussillon and Anjou, and had secured for ever the grandeur and independence of France. Near the end of his reign (A.D. 1481) Marseilles became at last a French port, ready to play a great part in the development of the Mediterranean interests of the kingdom.

In sum, Louis XI is the true founder of the French monarchy in its later form, as the government of a nation ruled by absolute power. The people, seeing all authority in one man's hands, naturally regarded him as the source of all their miseries; they hated and feared him alike; in their secret imaginations he was painted as a being scarcely human, and of demoniacal malignity. They did him injustice: with all his faults, Louis was a great King, and not a cruel one; yet the popular instinct had a truth in it; and the cry of thankfulness which went up from every hut in France when his death was known, must be remembered also when we sum up the notable deeds of Louis XI.

CHAPTER VI.

Anne of Beaujeu, and the First Period of Charles VIII. A.D. 1483–1494.

In one breast alone survived the spirit of Louis XI: and, fortunately for France, this survivor now governed the kingdom for eight quiet years. Those who deem the late King to have been a great monarch may well point to Anne of France, his eldest child, the wife of Peter II of Bourbon, Lord of Beaujeu. She was now in her twenty-second year; a woman of rare sagacity and prudence, in which her father rejoiced greatly; for such a daughter seemed to him to be one of the triumphs of his life. He admired her as much as he despised and neglected his feeble son, who now, at the age of thirteen, ascended the throne. To her and her husband the dying King left the care of the untutored boy. Though by French law he had just reached his majority, still his sister had inspired him with such a just fear of her, that for more than eight years she was virtual Queen of France. In her, the first and perhaps the best of that series of remarkable women who hold high place in the annals of the rulers of France, nature triumphed over the Salic Law. The dislike of Charles VIII, who chafed under her masterly control, the absence of an actual testament devising the charge of the realm to her, the illwill of the royal Princes, of the Noblesse, of the States General;—all these things were against her; yet she bore them all down, quelled insurrection, defended the frontiers against foreign princes, made peace at

home, lessened the public burdens, and gave the country time to breathe and to recover strength. Then, when at last Charles VIII shook himself free from her wholesome influence, and went his disastrous way, she gave up her task, showing her ability not least by the quiet skill with which she withdrew from public life.

History says little of Anne of Beaujeu, 'Madame la Grande,' as she was rightly styled. And yet she deserves the highest honour for having given tranquillity to France, for having fulfilled the last and wisest wishes of Louis XI, and for having guided the kingdom for eight years, between the fury of the nobles and the folly of the King. At the end, she watched and helped to carry through the great intrigue by which Charles VIII won that splendid prize, Anne of Brittany; when this was achieved, she bade farewell to power, and returned to the simple duties of her home. She was a true and noble lady, of kingly wisdom and politic skill. Her very success has doomed her to the neglect of posterity: she was neither tragical nor wicked; and the historians of the time have passed her by almost without a word. She dealt sharply with Philip of Commines after the death of Louis XI, as indeed he justly deserved; and the historian has meanly avenged himself on her by omitting from his Memoirs the years of her admirable government, and even the very mention of her name.

When Charles VIII came to the throne, the natural reaction of the nobles against the despotism of the late reign was ready to break forth: and the first task of Anne was to defend the monarchy from it. As rivals she had the two princes of the blood-royal, Duke John of Bourbon and Louis of Orleans[1]. Of these, Bourbon was indolent and weak, and gave little anxiety; Orleans, the heir-presumptive to the Crown, was careless and immersed in pleasures; wherefore these Princes hindered her but little. The tools and friends of the late King, odious to all, she allowed to perish, for she had no interest in their defence. The greater nobles seemed to be about to shake themselves

[1] Louis of Orleans, afterwards Louis XII.

free from the royal yoke; they met in high heart in the States General[1] at Tours (A.D. 1484) where strange things were heard, old claims exhumed, new methods attempted, and nothing achieved. These famous Estates of 1484, of which so much has been said, were in fact only a part of the general reaction against the rule of Louis XI; except in so far as they afforded an example of three chambers composed of elected members[2], they in no way advanced the political life or liberties of France. They met, heard harangues, listened to unwonted language as to the ultimate sovereignty of the people, and of their right to elect the King. The Estate of the nobles claimed its old privileges, freedom from military service, and the odious rights of the chase: the Duke of Orleans was named head of the King's government. The Estate of the clergy asserted its rights, as defined by the Council of Basel, and by the guarantees of the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges; the Third Estate bewailed the misery of the people, the oppression of the Papacy, the curse of wandering bands of soldiers, the severity of taxation, and so forth. But what came of it all? Anne of Beaujeu, whose name is as studiously omitted from the acts of the States General as from the page of history, retained her ascendancy over the King's mind, and ruled serenely, indifferent to the utterances of the great Assembly. The States were dissolved; their decrees were written on the sand.

The Duke of Orleans, whose lively manners and love of pleasure had attracted the young King, in spite of his sister's warnings, now grew too powerful; and she tried to seize him in Paris. He escaped, and busied himself in forming a new league with Francis of Brittany, the Archduke Maximilian, and Richard III of England. Combinations repeat themselves; it was the League of the Public Weal, or its faint shadow, reproduced after the lapse of twenty years. But the conditions of such combinations are never the same: and thus, while in the League of 1464 the centre of opposition lay on the Flemish

[1] See note on pp. 63, 64.
[2] See Martin, Histoire des Français, vii. p. 170.

frontier, in 1485 the centre lay in Brittany; and the fortunes of the French monarchy waited for a while on those of that great duchy. Anne, with the clear gaze of a statesman, saw how this was; and decided that ere long Brittany must be brought into harmony with the kingdom. We shall see how well she succeeded: for though she took as much pains to conceal her own share of power as others take to show their authority, and though consequently the details of the period are obscure to trace, the net results are clear, and the gain to the monarchy so great that Anne of Beaujeu has a right to be reckoned among the founders of the royal power in France.

There can be no doubt that those who formed the Court in her day, as well as the mass of the people, were quite content under her rule: she abated taxation, brought down the curse of mercenaries; and the gratitude of France rewarded her by making it impossible for her enemies to form any solid party against her. When the nobles appealed for help to Richard of England, she had Henry of Richmond ready at hand to keep him in check: she lent that able Englishman money and men. First, by the simple menace of his presence on the Breton coast she frightened King Richard into inaction; and then, in August 1485, she sent forth her candidate for the English throne: the battle of Bosworth was fought, and Richmond became Henry VII. All danger from that side being thus averted, Anne of Beaujeu could boast that she had given tranquillity and firm government to England as well as to France. One of the first acts of the new Tudor sovereign was the conclusion of a truce, and then of an alliance, with Charles VIII.

The Estates of Flanders willingly gave Maximilian plenty of trouble; and that prince, flying with uncertain aim from end to end of Europe, was little likely to become formidable to France. Even in Brittany, the centre of opposition, Anne was able to raise up a strong party dividing the duchy: the nobles hated Landois, a man of the people, the able and odious minister of Francis II, the Duke; at last Landois was taken and hung; Francis was reduced to quiet, the Duke of Orleans besieged and captured in

his castle of Beaugency, his strongest supporters exiled, specially the younger Dunois, son of the old Bastard of Orleans, the soul of the league against the Crown: and all this before the confederation had time to grow into definite form and consistency.

Directly it was too late, Maximilian, ill-timed ever, ever unsuccessful, once more appeared on the scene. He marched into Artois, breaking the third treaty of Arras, while the confederates of the south at the same time revolted openly. But Anne was prompt and strong; Maximilian was easily held in check in the north, while the young King, full of delight at the new and exciting sport, rode at the head of a well-appointed army into the south: the confederates submitted at once, for the revolt was supported by the nobles only; the cities everywhere welcomed Charles as a deliverer. From this first expedition Charles VIII got that taste for the pleasures of warfare treated as easy adventure which soon led him to the Italian invasion.

Meanwhile the sagacity of Anne saw that while north and south could easily be appeased, the real danger lay in the west. There the Duke of Orleans, joined by the Prince of Orange, had made common cause with Francis II of Brittany, and threatened to invade the very heart of France. Then Anne, true to her vigorous policy of always taking the offensive, poured troops under La Trémoille into Brittany, took place after place, and presently fell in with the confederates at S. Aubin du Cormier, as they were endeavouring to relieve Fougères, then closely beleaguered by the royal troops. On the 27th July, 1488, was fought a great and obstinate battle, which decided the fate of the monarchy in its relations with the duchy of Brittany. The victory of the French was complete. It is said that four thousand Bretons and confederates were slain, and as many taken prisoners. Among the latter were the Duke of Orleans and the Prince of Orange, with many other lords and knights. This one blow broke up the whole league; Orleans was imprisoned in the great tower at Bourges; Maximilian was compelled to respect the terms of the treaty of Arras; and finally, a treaty signed at Sablé in Anjou (August, A.D. 1488) closed the war.

The Duke of Brittany submitted; he died almost immediately after signing the treaty which compromised the independence of his duchy. Thus ended this little struggle, 'the crazy war[1],' as it was scornfully called: it showed a state of things very different from that which prevailed in 1465, when Louis XI could hold out on the defensive against the princes and nobles only by employing all the arts of weakness. Now, the monarchy could take the offensive, and their coalition crumbled into dust.

Francis II, last Duke of Brittany, had left only two daughters, Anne and Isabel. The younger died in 1490, and Anne of Brittany became sole representative of that great House. Who should win her and carry off the prize, now became the most prominent question in Europe. The gallant Maximilian seemed to be the fortunate suitor. It is said that though Anne had never seen him, the reports of his bravery, character, and good looks, as shown by his portrait, had won her heart. She was married to him by proxy, with every binding form, in 1490; and had the gallant King of the Romans gone straight into Brittany to claim his young bride, he might easily have secured her and the great duchy; then his powerful arms would almost have surrounded the kingdom of France. But Maximilian ever grasped at more than he could hold, his schemes being larger than his capacity or his means; so that, instead of being in Brittany at the critical time, he was far away on the Danube, intent on the recovery of the hereditary Duchies of Austria after the death of the great Hungarian Matthias Corvinus. While he won back Vienna, he lost Brittany.

The French armies pressed ever more and more into that Duchy. When the marriage by proxy with Maximilian, which was kept a profound secret for several months, became known, the Lord of Albret, the second suitor for the hand of the Duchess, seeing that his suit had failed, proposed to console himself by wresting from her some portion of her domains, and with this view he attached himself to Charles VIII, giving

[1] 'La guerre folle.'

up to the King the castle of Nantes, which carried with it the submission of the town. In April, 1491, Charles made triumphant entry into that place. Maximilian could do nothing to help the powerless 'Queen of the Romans,' as Anne of Brittany was now styled. The war in the East still raged, Flanders was in revolt, Henry VII of England refused to aid him. The policy of Anne of France triumphed on every side.

The Duchess Anne had shut herself up in Rennes, with such forces as she still had at command. But her prospects were desperate; before the end of November she was obliged to make terms with the French King. A public treaty was signed, while underneath the cover of it secret negotiations went on. It was represented to her that Charles her suzerain had never given his consent to the marriage with Maximilian, and that that marriage was therefore void; that Maximilian was neglecting her for his own interests; that she would do well to look for another defender and mate. In the King's secret counsels it was agreed that he himself should seize the prize. True, he was already married, or at least as far married as Anne herself was. There was that little lady of eleven years, Margaret of Austria, Maximilian's daughter, to whom, years back[1], he had been betrothed. She was being brought up for him at the French court. But Brittany outweighed all the dower of Margaret; and indeed Anne of France was clear-sighted enough to see that Brittany, removed from the one scale to the other, would be a grand acquisition, would take away a standing menace on the west, and would enable the monarchy to secure Artois and perhaps Franche Comté, in spite of all resistance. So it was planned that Charles should repudiate Margaret, Maximilian's daughter, and should carry off Anne as his bride. It was a double insult to the King of the Romans. Charles, in the presence of his presumptive heir, the Duke of Orleans, and of others of his court, was solemnly married to the Duchess at Rennes. It was stipulated that Brittany should belong to the survivor of the pair; and that if Anne outlived Charles, she

[1] See above, p. 97.

should be bound to marry the successor to the throne of France; and this actually took place when the Duke of Orleans became King as Louis XII.

Thus was Brittany at last united to the crown of France. It did not however form an integral portion of the monarchy till 1515, when the Princess Claude, daughter of Louis XII, and sole heiress to the duchy, who the year before had married Francis, Count of Angoulême, ascended with him the throne of France.

The Papacy hastened to send such dispensations as might be needed. Brittany acquiesced, but war again began to move among the confederate princes round about. They seemed to feel that a new age was coming, in which this central and now compacted kingdom of France would seek to lead all Europe. The troops of Maximilian took Arras and some Picard towns, Franche Comté revolted, English Henry VII attacked Boulogne, Ferdinand of Spain threatened Roussillon. But Charles VIII yielded here and there: Henry he bought off; it was said of that thrifty monarch that he took money first from England that he might make war, and then from his enemies that he might make peace, and so profited at both ends. To Ferdinand Charles ceded Roussillon and La Cerdagne; to Maximilian he restored the dowry of Margaret, the repudiated and slighted princess. Withal he secured Brittany, and kept the core of the nation sound.

This was the last public act of 'Madame la Grande.' She knew that the young King chafed under her wise rule, and that his ideas were now opposed to hers. He had given way to his liking for the Duke of Orleans, and was beginning to listen, in his vain-glorious humour, to those who would tempt him into Italy. Quietly and by degrees the Princess Anne withdrew from a position that was rapidly becoming untenable. She ceased to perform any longer her queenly tasks, and returned contentedly to her quiet duties as a wife. These she tranquilly fulfilled for many years, dying not long before the fatal battle of Pavia, that striking proof of the folly of the Italian ambition

of the French kings, and of the wisdom the Princess had shown when she set herself against the first beginnings of it.

She left France stronger and healthier than it had been for ages. Taxes were low, cultivation flourished; no foreign invasion or wandering mercenaries ruined the husbandman's fields; the oppression of the noble class was abated. The King had a flourishing exchequer and a well-appointed army. We shall see how the folly of Charles VIII, who seemed to be utterly devoid of a right judgment, squandered these great advantages on a visionary ambition.

The earlier age of French war-history is ended. Henceforth the great nobles, if they revolt against the Crown, will rest for support on some other European power: the risks for France will no longer come from Flanders or Brittany, but from Spain and Italy. The relations with Italy will form the chain which will bind France to her new destinies as one of the great European monarchies of modern history.

BOOK II.

THE AGE OF THE ITALIAN EXPEDITIONS.

INTRODUCTION.

WE enter on a period in which France played a chief part in the creation of those international European relations which we are wont to call the Balance of Power. The starting-point of her intervention in general politics was her interference in Italian affairs, which not only brought her into collision with Germany and Spain, but also subjected her to all those influences which Italy, with her manifold fascinations of art and skill, of learning, luxury, and subtle political action, could exert on the susceptible nature of the French. Though the share of France in the general relations of European history has often been fully and clearly explained, her subjection to Italian influences has perhaps not received so much notice as it deserves. The power exerted by the genius of France on others, and the position she claims as a leader of opinion in Europe, have appeared so striking that we have failed to realise the great influence which the characteristic qualities of other nations have exerted on her.

And yet France has received as much as she has given. Nor is this strange. That vivacity and sympathy, that sprightliness of mind, clearness of idea and expression, bright and logical, witty if rarely humorous, that cleverness which under-

stands, and that dexterity which can reproduce the thought of others; all these qualities make her equally well-fitted to receive or to give.

In the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries alike, France owed much of her intellectual life to other nations; to Italy and to England. In the fifteenth century she had fallen far behind: her long wars, the clash of interests within her borders, the ruin of her prosperity, had all hindered her natural growth; the influences of the Renaissance had scarcely penetrated to her; her cities had none of the life and energy of the German towns; though she had a fertile soil and an ingenious people, neither one nor other had had fair play or a good chance of development.

But now in the end of the century France set forth on a kind of voyage of discovery, and lighted on the new world of Italy, a paradise ablaze with all the glories of intellect and art, and warm with the sunny pleasures of sense. The effect was electrical; she awoke to a strong desire for culture, which showed itself first of all in the royal family and the court. Francis I is rightly styled 'the King of Culture.' The Italian ladies who married French princes influenced France deeply. They developed the taste for Italian intrigue-politics; and thanks to the relations of France with Italy, she cast in her lot with the Latin nations and not with the Teutonic, when the great questions of the Reformation were in due time presented to her for answer, as to the other nations of Europe.

'Italy is the tomb of the French' is an old saying, for which history has provided plenty of justification[1]. But it may well be believed that the influences of Italy on France, which seemed to attach themselves to whatever was least valuable in her national growth, have been even more destructive of her true happiness than the wars waged in the Peninsula were fatal to her soldiers.

[1] We find the phrase in Commines VI. ch. ii. (Dupont, ii. p. 181): 'N'y est mémoire d'eux que pour les sepultures de leurs prédécesseurs'; and Bourrienne, Mémoires, i. p. 121: 'Convaincue de ce fait, malheureusement confirmé par l'histoire, que l'Italie a toujours été le tombeau des Français.'

If we take the list of those words which crossed the Alps in the sixteenth century and found a home in France, we cannot fail to see at a glance what was the texture of these Italian influences. We shall find a number of court-terms, expressing the fact that the ladies brought with them their home-ideas from the courts of Florence or of Rome. There are the names of games and pastimes, from the pleasure-loving idle foreigners. Terms of art appear of course in great abundance. There are also war-terms, words of commerce, and many uncomfortable and even discreditable linguistic adventurers, slang terms, thieves' patter, scornful diminutives and nicknames. Hardly a single noble thought finds expression among these words; the culture of art, the depravity of morals, the degradation of man's scheme of life,—these are the matters which are fully represented by these travelled foreigners; these the main elements of influence with which Italy in her beautiful corruption affected France at the end of the fifteenth century[1].

[1] For a complete and classified list of such Italian-French words, see Brachet, Etymological Dictionary of the French Language (English edition, 1873), Introduction, pp. xxx-xxxiii.

CHAPTER I.

The Beginnings of Foreign Adventure. A.D. 1494–1498.

More than thirty years before the expedition of Charles VIII into Italy, Cosmo de' Medici held a conference with Pius II respecting the crown of Naples, and the Italian relations of France. That statesmanlike and wary Pontiff[1] showed the Florentine what dangers would result from a friendship with France: and the events of 1494 proved how far-sighted he was. An Angevin sovereign in Naples, he said, 'would certainly not advance the liberty of Italy': the French once there would subdue Sienna; the Florentine people would play into their hands; 'the Duke of Modena was more Gallic than the French themselves; the lesser princes were that way minded; Genoa and Asti were completely French; were the Pope also to take the same side, the whole Peninsula would become French: in supporting Ferdinand of Aragon he was defending Italy[2].'

Even at that time he might have added that the Italians had ceased to be soldiers; and that there was no one to rely on. All military work was done by German and Swiss landsknechts and other mercenaries: war had become more and more a pretty game, in which little or no blood was shed[3]: the foreign condottieri, the captains who sold themselves and their men to the petty Italian powers[4], had a very pleasant life, and drove a flourishing trade.

[1] Hallam, Middle Ages, vol. i. p. 497, note (ed. 1846).
[2] Comment. Pii II, iv. p. 96, quoted from Spondanus by Hallam.
[3] See Guicciardini, A. 1495; lib. i. f. 36 (1580).
[4] Chief among these had been an Englishman, Sir John Hawkwood.

While Louis XI lived there was no likelihood of serious interference; it was different under his ignorant and ambitious successor. When the Count of Maine bequeathed to the Crown of France his claims and rights, Louis had promptly taken possession of Provence, as being a solid gain and coherent to the kingdom; on the other hand he had taken no steps to assert his claim to Naples, and left that shadowy inheritance to allure his unwiser son.

At this time Italy was far before all the world in material wealth and intellectual light: wars had ceased; the feudal nobles to a large extent had been absorbed by the cities; the power and splendour of the great burghers exceeded all that had ever been seen in Europe. Who does not know that description of Italy in the year 1490, which forms the introduction to Guicciardini's graphic account of the expedition of Charles VIII? 'Never had Italy enjoyed so great prosperity, or proved herself in so desirable a state, as that in which she was securely taking her ease in 1490, and the years immediately following. For she was in utmost peace and tranquillity, cultivated as much in the more hilly and barren districts as in the plain lands where the fertility was greater; subjected to no lordship save that of her own people; teeming with inhabitants and wealth, and also made exceeding glorious by the magnificence of many princes, and by the splendour of many right noble and fair cities, and by the seat and majesty of Religion; she was full of men most distinguished in the administration of public affairs, and of high and noble genius in all the sciences and in every art, whether liberal or industrial'[1]. Still, this supreme bliss of cultured ease was not secure: in fact the state of Italy at this time was uneasy, for the relations of the greater powers in her had changed. Formerly

(The name is written as *Aucud* by contemporary Italians, showing that the vulgar pronunciation of the name was the same then and now). Of him Hallam says (though indeed but little is known of him) that he was 'the first distinguished military captain who had appeared in Europe since the destruction of the Roman Empire, the first real general of modern times.'

[1] Guicciardini, Storia d' Italia, i. f. 1 (ed. 1580).

Milan and Naples had balanced Venice and Florence, the friends of France: but the changes in the latter half of this century had led Florence, under guidance of the Medici, to look askance at the French policy. At Naples the rivalry between the Angevin and Aragonese claimants had ended in the founding of a line of Spanish sovereigns by Alfonso the Magnanimous. But the misrule of Ferdinand had left behind a legacy of ill-will at Naples; and his son Alfonso II had all the qualities required to kindle that ill-will into a flame. Florence, only half-dazzled by the splendour of Lorenzo dei Medici, who was at this time a really absolute monarch, and had contemptuously crushed the ancient institutions of the Republic, was moved to her very depths on the death of that prince by rival factions, among which the grand figure of Savonarola, the republican friar, prophet, and politician, towered for a while predominant. The city, seeing that the Medici had opposed France, naturally turned for support to Charles VIII: God, said the patriot-friar, would be with the King if he would defend the liberties of Florence. Genoa held to her ancient friendship for the Angevin claimant of the throne of Naples; Milan had ceased to support the Aragonese side, and under the rule of Lodovico Sforza 'il Moro,' leant for support on the French alliance: Savoy, which held then, as she still holds, the keys of Italy from the side of France, was little more than a French dependency.

Thus stood Italian politics. There was much to allure an adventurous and thoughtless prince, who was just beginning to feel his independence, and to desire to exert his power. The Angevin claim on Naples had descended to him[1]: Lodovico invited him to Milan: the patriots at Florence stretched out their hands to him. The King's favourite and adviser Stephen de Vesc, who had lands in Provence, was the medium through whom certain 'clerks of Provence' approached the King with pleas for intervention based on the wills of the first Charles of Anjou, brother of S. Louis, and of other Angevin princes:

[1] See Table I. p. 120.

Stephen 'nourished his master in this language[1].' The King, who was light and unwise, decided for going: 'but there was none save himself and two lesser folk who found it good.' The two lesser folk were this Stephen de Vesc, who hoped for a duchy in the kingdom of Naples, and the financier Briçonnet, who looked forward to a brilliant ecclesiastical career.

The mind of the King was filled with far-reaching schemes: it was an age of many unlimited plans, and some marvellous successes, surpassing the tales of romance. Charles lived in a dream of chivalry: he knew nothing of war, and thought to call out his feudal levies, ride through Italy, secure Naples, push on to quell the Turk, and then return home, his brow wreathed with laurel, hailed as conqueror and saviour of Europe and of Christendom.

Rarely has so great a change in the world's politics been enterprised so lightly. Here was an act, destined to revolutionise the relations of Europe, rouse new antagonism, bring together the three newly-compacted powers of France, Spain, and Turkey, compel the interference for centuries of Germany in Italy; and he who undertook it was 'a very young man, weakly of person, self-willed, little surrounded either by prudent men or good chiefs, and without ready money.' He adventured it thoughtlessly with 'a merry company, great plenty of young gentlemen, but much lack of discipline[2].'

While Columbus was opening out (A. D. 1492) a new world, and laying the foundations on which the fabric of commerce should presently be built up, Charles set out on this reckless voyage of discovery across the Alps; and the astonished Frenchmen found that almost at their doors there was a world of boundless horizon. The whole of modern society rests on the combination of politics with commerce; and we have in these two contemporary events, in the discovery of America and the interference of France with Italy, the beginnings of the modern European political system.

[1] Commines, VII. i. (ii. p. 298).

[2] Ibid. (p. 292).

Charles VIII set out for Italy in August 1494, and returned home again in the October of the next year. His forces were large; and considering the disorganised and unwarlike state of Italy, very formidable.

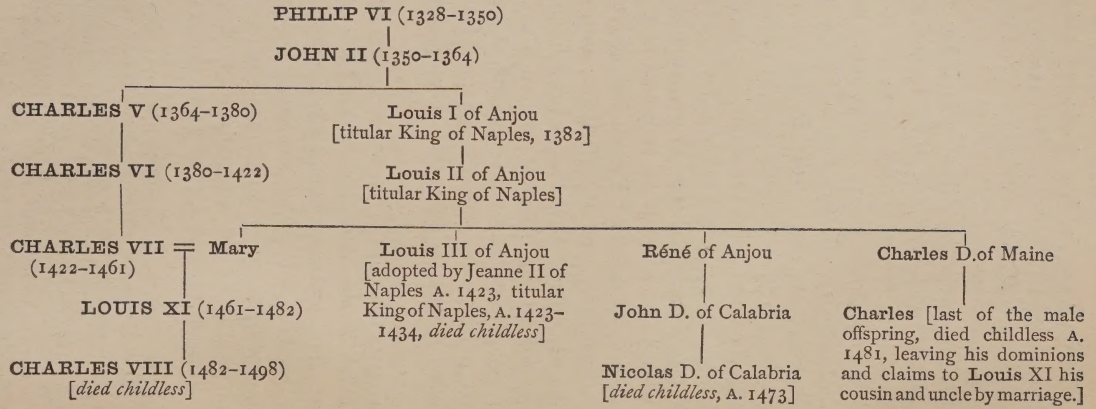
He trusted neither in his alliances in Milan and Venice, nor in the tendencies of Genoa, nor in the enthusiasts of Florence: he had ordered a fleet to cruise along the coast to support him, and his army was completely reconstructed. The three branches of infantry, cavalry, and artillery are now seen in separate organisations: it is the framework of the modern army that for the first time appears in Europe. In all it amounted to two and thirty thousand men, when it descended on Lombardy: the heavy battalions of Swiss infantry, and those of the German Landsknechts which presently joined him, gave it solidity such as no army in Italy had had for many centuries: there were the light French infantry, chiefly Gascons, with their formidable bows and arbalests; then came the grand 'companies of Ordinance' of France herself, some ten thousand horse; the artillery was splendid, and such as Italy had never beheld[1]; being thirty-six bronze cannon, and a crowd of culverins and other lesser pieces, which for lightness and effect far surpassed all that had hitherto accompanied the march of an army[2].

Following this gallant force, so noticeable as the first of the many French armies that have crossed the Alps into Italy since that time, and surrounded by the hundred gentlemen and four hundred archers of his household, splendid troops splendidly equipped, rode the young King, perhaps the most ill-formed man in all the company. The Italians, when they saw him, were shocked at his ugliness: it outraged their sense

[1] Guicciardini is deeply impressed by them: 'pezzi molto più espediti, ne d' altro che di bronzo, i quali chiamavano cannoni'—with iron balls, not stone, drawn on carts by horses, not by oxen; quick in transport, easily planted, firing very rapidly—'questo più tosto diabolico che humano instrumento.' Guicc. A. 1494, lib. i. f. 25 (ed. 1580).

[2] The sum total of the force, all told, that entered Rome, is reckoned at from fifty to sixty thousand. For details as to the first of modern armies see Sismondi, Républiques Italiennes, vii. 383, 384.

TABLE I.—THE CLAIM OF CHARLES VIII TO THE CROWN OF NAPLES.


PHILIP VI (1328–1350)
JOHN II (1350–1364)
CHARLES V (1364–1380)
CHARLES VI (1380–1422)
CHARLES VII (1422–1461)
Mary
LOUIS XI (1461–1482)
CHARLES VIII (1482–1498)
[died childless]
Louis I of Anjou
[titular King of Naples, 1382]
Louis II of Anjou
[titular King of Naples]
Louis III of Anjou
[adopted by Jeanne II of Naples A. 1423, titular King of Naples, A. 1423–1434, died childless]
Réné of Anjou
John D. of Calabria
Nicolas D. of Calabria
[died childless, A. 1473]
Charles D. of Maine
Charles [last of the male offspring, died childless A. 1481, leaving his dominions and claims to Louis XI his cousin and uncle by marriage.]

of propriety, their keen artistic feeling for beauty. 'He was more like a monster than a man,' says Guicciardini[1]. They nicknamed him the Cabozucco, because of his huge ugly head, and also, in part, by reason of his obstinacy. We have a clear description of him from a very observant Italian eye-witness[2]: 'His head was big, his nose hooked and large; his lips rather flat, chin round with a kind of little ditch in it, his eyes great and starting out of his head; his neck too short and wanting in stiffness; his chest and back were broad'—he concludes from what he saw of him that his body was composed of 'poor paste[3]': he was short of stature and misshapen. 'He was not without some acquaintance with Art, yet hardly knew his letters; he was ambitious, but unfit for rule, being ever surrounded by his favourites, with whom he preserved no dignity or majesty; he hated toil and tasks, and when he did attend to business was of no prudence nor judgment . . . desired glory, but rather with a rush than with wise counsel; liberal, but without discernment, measure, or consideration; obstinate, not constant': thus is Charles described, at the time of his expedition[4].

This was the Prince who rode so lightly into Italy, that Pope Alexander VI declared[5] that he came in not with arms to conquer so much as with chalk to mark up his lodgings in the different towns at which he halted. Italy was utterly unprepared for war: she made no resistance worthy of notice: the southward march of the French was one long triumph, in which the invaders and the invaded mutually wondered at each other.

It will not be in the scope of this work to enter in detail into the foreign expeditions of France. It must be enough if we

[1] Guicciardini, A. 1494, lib. i. f. 23 (ed. 1580): 'D' aspetto . . . bruttissimo . . . pareva quasi più simile à mostro che à huomo.'

[2] Barthelemy Cocles, of Bologna. Quoted in Preface to Commines, Collect. Univ. x. pp. 157, 158.

[3] 'Composé de mauvaise pâte,' says Barthelemy.

[4] Guicciardini, ubi supra.

[5] Nardi, Vita di Malespina (A. 1597) p. 18, Machiavelli, Principe, c. xii, and Bacon, Nov. Org. I. xxv. It was a well-known saying; see Ellis and Spedding's Bacon, i. p. 162.

give them in brief outline, and trace their consequences on the French character and history.

The King lay several weeks at Lyons: for if his schemes were heroic, his acts were quite the contrary; there he wasted his health and all his resources of money in dissolute living: at last, when pest broke out, he moved on, and crossed, after some hesitation, the Monte Ginevra; the Swiss, under the Duke of Orleans, had already defeated some troops landed by Alfonso II of Naples at Ripallo, and were showing so menacing a front that the Neapolitan army was afraid to attack the territory of Milan. The royal army passed through the north of Italy as in triumph: at Asti, where the King repeated the debauches of Lyons, he was attacked by a loathsome disease, and hung for some days between life and death. Each step he took in Italy was marked with cruelty, contempt for the inhabitants, ignorance, and folly: unable to comprehend the refinements of Italian politics, he blundered absurdly; and thought himself, wherever he went, the conqueror, not the friend, of those who welcomed him: for on the whole Italy did give him a hearty welcome. But the savage ferocity of his troops, their rapacity, and his own readiness to display himself as the triumphant victor, though at first it made his passage easy,—for the Italians were too much astonished and terrified to resist,—paved the way for his ignominious expulsion at the end. Lodovico 'il Moro' hurried back to Milan, as soon as he saw the French well on their way towards Pisa, and, his nephew Gian Galeazzo having died,—by poison it was whispered,—proclaimed himself Duke of Milan in his stead, and busied himself consolidating his own power, and preparing for the overthrow of his French allies.

They meanwhile were received with transports of joy by Pisa: the citizens, weary of the Florentine yoke, hailed Charles as a deliverer; and he promised to 'do them justice, and was pleased that they should have their liberty.' Nevertheless he placed a garrison in one of the citadels which the Florentines had built to overawe the town. While at Pisa, he had received a strange

embassage. The Florentines, excited by the near approach of the French, had already given vent to their long-pent irritation, and taking advantage of the absence of Piero de' Medici, who had gone to make terms with Charles, had proclaimed a Republic, branding the Medici with the name of traitors. From the new republican magistrates, whose movements were really guided by the impulse of Savonarola's genius, now came an embassy headed by the great Dominican himself. It was a strange meeting: neither the speech nor the thoughts of the Italian friar were intelligible to the ignorant and wretched creature whom he saluted as God's envoy. The King answered with some vague expressions of good-will: and after a few days, still full of the idea that he was a great general and conqueror, he entered the admiring city. Great was the amazement of the citizens when they heard him declare that he proposed to recall Piero de' Medici and to establish him as his lieutenant in Florence, and also to impose a fine on the city for its revolt. But the magistrates stood firm, and the King, after a stormy scene, yielded; abandoned the Medici, accepted a subsidy of 120,000 ducats, and undertook to restore to the Florentines all the strong places he had occupied in their territories. He at once broke his word to Pisa, and promised to hand her over to her more powerful rival. Then he moved onwards towards Rome.

On the night of the last day of 1494 he made his entry into the Eternal City: the 'barbarians,' the 'Gauls,' entered by the Porto del Popolo in presence of an astonished crowd, which for six hours watched this strange host defile by torchlight into the city. Alexander VI, after some resistance, yielded to so great a force, and Charles, though he paid all outward respect to the Pontiff, treated Rome completely as a conquered city. When at last, after nearly a month's sojourn, he moved on for Naples, he took with him as a legate, or indeed as a hostage, the Pope's infamous son, Cæsar Borgia, 'who seemed to have been born only that there might be in the world one man wicked enough to carry out the designs of his father Alexander[1].'

[1] Guicciardini i. § 4.

He left behind him at Rome, as he had done at Milan, at Pisa, at Florence, an implacable hostility, of which he was utterly unconscious, but which only waited its time.

Terrified by his approach, Alfonso II fled from Naples, leaving the gloomy heritage of his many crimes to his son Ferdinand II, who almost alone among the Italian princes of the age had shown vigour and capacity, many noble qualities, and a patriotic spirit; almost alone he had endeavoured by manful resistance to stem the flood of French invasion. Charles VIII, scattering the forces of Ferdinand, who had gallantly but in vain tried to defend the line of the Garigliano, came on to Naples; the Neapolitans having threatened Ferdinand's life, that Prince escaped to the island of Ischia, while Naples, smitten with that same unreasoning delight which had seized all the cities of Italy, opened her gates to the liberator, to the invincible prince whom in their warm imaginations they regarded as the champion and assertor of their liberties against domestic tyranny. How often has the Peninsula made this mistake! how many bitter lessons had she to learn, ere she could not only say but believe that 'Italy shall stand alone[1].' At this time, as again long after in the days of Napoleon, the Italians learnt what was meant by French liberation.

Charles VIII made entry into the fair city (A.D. 1495) as if he had been the world's conqueror: we are told that 'he deemed himself another Charlemagne[2], and was duly crowned, and that he wore the insignia of imperial power[3], as though he were set on the recovery of Constantinople. Thus, 'beyond the example of Julius Cæsar, having conquered ere he saw[4],' Charles almost without an effort became lord of Naples, and seemed omnipotent in Italy. Men said that the Sultan Bajazet trembled because of him, so wonderful was the report of his prowess that reached the East: an insurrection broke out in Greece; for the

[1] 'Italia farà da se.'

[2] La Vallée, Histoire des Français, ii. p. 260.

[3] Commines, VII. xvii. (ii. p. 397), if we may adopt the reading 'alloit en manteau imperial'; but the passage is obscure.

[4] Guicciardini, A. 1495, i. p. 38 (ed. 1580).

moment everything seemed to beckon on the King of France to yet higher fortune and imperial enterprise.

But even while all wore so bright an aspect, the King's position had already become untenable: before entering Naples he had learnt enough to rouse anxiety and suspicion; Alexander VI had refused to grant him the investiture of that kingdom, and was busy at the task of building up a league against the invader with Ferdinand of Aragon and the Republic of Venice; and, as if to smoothe the way for communications between Pope and Sultan, Zizim, brother of Bajazet, a refugee and prisoner at Rome, said to have been kept there because the Grand Turk had bribed the Pope to hold him fast, now perished of poison, which all said was administered to him by the Pope's agents. Charles had meant to use Zizim as a pretender to the throne of Constantinople[1], hoping thereby to paralyse the Moslem power; then he intended to take advantage of the division thus caused, and to establish himself on the Bosphorus, as the descendant and representative of the Latin Emperors. Cæsar Borgia, who had been sent as a kind of hostage and guarantee of faith with Charles VIII, had also given his friend the slip, and escaping from his honourable captivity had returned to Rome.

Charles had gone rashly on, farther and farther from his base of operations, while at every step he had alienated some friend or made some enemy: all the elements of revolt and resistance now began to stir behind him. While French pride and arrogance were disgusting the Neapolitans, who are so warm and so quickly moved to love or hate, and with contemptuous ignorance were rendering insecure the ground they stood on, the rest of Italy, offended with the foreigners, was preparing to cut off their retreat. Venice formed and led the league: Lodovico il Moro purchased the investiture of Milan from the Emperor Maximilian, and at once went with Venice; Alfonso II, Ferdinand of Naples, the Emperor, the Pope, all joined them; those two

[1] Zizim had already twice (in 1481 and 1482) attempted to dethrone Bajazet.

great sovereigns who already (A.D. 1492) had combined their power, and were welding Spain into one powerful monarchy, Ferdinand and Isabella, also gladly acceded; and Charles VIII found himself face to face with the coming antagonist of France, the new Spanish power: the difficult line of march which connected him with home grew daily more precarious. Spain undertook to throw an army into Sicily: the Venetian fleet to watch the coasts, and render retreat by sea impossible; while both on the north and south the allies prepared to penetrate into France, and shake her monarch's power at home.

In face of this formidable coalition, the King's position was one of utmost peril; he could not stay where he was; he therefore decided to leave half his force in Naples, and with the other half to march hastily homewards. In May the French set forth, passed through Rome, found the gates of Florence shut in their face by Savonarola, were welcomed at Pisa, because Florence had refused them entry, gathered up all the garrisons left in the strongholds along the way, recrossed the Apennines successfully, though with a great effort; beat at Fornovo (July 6, 1495) a large and incoherent host, sent out to bar their way—the King himself behaving with conspicuous courage—and pursued their march as far as to Asti. Here Charles halted; for, hard by, cooped up in Novara by the Germans and Italians under Duke Lodovico, lay his kinsman, Louis of Orleans, the other claimant of Milan. Things looked very ill, in spite of the brilliant victory of Fornovo: Charles was too eager for pleasure to make any serious effort to disengage his cousin Louis. Negociations began: Charles abandoned Pisa to the Florentines, whereon Florence declared herself his friend; and Lodovico was quite satisfied with the position he already held, and with the cession of Novara, which the King did not attempt to relieve. The town was evacuated by the Duke of Orleans, and peace signed on the 10th of October, Charles engaging himself not to support the claims of Louis of Orleans on Milan, and on the other hand retaining his own claims on Genoa. The way out of Italy being opened by this convention, Charles hastened

back to France and reached Lyons early in November, where 'he cared only to amuse himself and make good cheer and tourney.' While he idly sojourned there his only son, the little Dauphin, died, and Louis Duke of Orleans became heir to the crown of France[1].

Meanwhile, in spite of chequered fortunes, in which their superiority in the field was still maintained, the French were gradually pushed out of Naples, where Gilbert of Montpensier and Stewart of Aubigny had been left, the first as Viceroy, the second as Constable of the kingdom. The French captains, driven from Naples and the coast, kept up a partisan warfare in the interior, being supported by a considerable faction among the inhabitants; had Charles VIII been a man of any vigour of conduct, he might still have asserted his claims to that crown with a chance of success. As it was he squandered time and treasure[2], giving out all the time that he was about to return to Italy, to punish Lodovico at Milan, and to help his friends and soldiers at Naples: but he did not stir. At last Ferdinand of Naples shut up the King's lieutenant Montpensier in the little town of Atella in the Basilicata, where after a time he was forced to capitulate: dissension, want of food, and the sense of neglect making farther resistance impossible. The French were all taken as prisoners of war to Naples, and thence the poor remainder—two-thirds had died of pest—came wretchedly by sea, some twelve hundred of them, home to France. A small body of three hundred Swiss who had loyally clung to the French in spite of all misfortunes and mismanagement, came with them, 'showing in their faces how much they had

[1] Commines, VIII. xx. (ii. p. 539), gives us a curious trait. The king put on his mourning for the boy, 'comme la raison le veult; mais peu luy dura le deuil: et la Royne de France . . . mena le plus grant deuil, qu'il est possible que femme peust faire, et longuement luy dura ce deuil, . . . mais au Roy son mary dura peu ce deuil . . . et la voulut reconforter de faire danser devant elle. Et y vindrent aucuns jeunes Seigneurs et Gentilz hommes, que le Roy y feit venir en pourpoinct pour dancer, et entre les aultres y estoit le Duc d'Orléans,' now the heir to the throne.

[2] Commines, VIII. xx. (ii. p. 538): 'De soy le Roy ne faisoit rien. Et qui les eust fournys de sommes d'argent, à heure, dont on a despondu six fois le double, jamais n'eussent perdu le royaulme.'

suffered, and all were ill': they looked more like skeletons than men. They brought home with them the curse of contagious diseases, contracted in Italy.

So by the autumn of 1496 the French had been entirely driven out of Italy; and the first great warlike expedition of modern times was at an end. Quite unconscious of the principles at work, yet feeling that the enterprise had in it some mysterious quality, some element of novelty and strangeness, Commines never fails to tell us that it was 'a mystery of God'; that 'God led it and not man.' The splendid outset and contemptible end; the swift turn of the wheel of fortune from the Imperial mantle at Naples to the discreditable convention at Novara; the want of skill and prudence in the King; the dreams of the Italians, the easy triumphal advance, and the toils and perils of the return, all these things seemed to the old historian to indicate the hand of God, leading the wayward monarch as He would. And in truth this invasion of Italy was as significant of a new age as was that other invasion just three centuries later, when the fresh martial vigour of the Revolution poured over into the Peninsula. There was the same glad reception of the French by the Italians; the same promises of liberation, of freedom, and the same complete deception. Charles VIII and Napoleon were equally willing to throw over their Italian friends, and to betray their confidence, if it seemed to their political advantage to do so: we may set the abandonment by Charles of Pisa to Florence over against the transfer of Venice by Napoleon to the Austrians.

But the man who had set these things in motion, this parent of the disasters of Italy, recked nothing of what he had done. He idly passed from place to place, with merry jousts and tournaments in every town, 'and thought of nothing else[1].' His favourites pulled some this way and some that, and so went things for a year and a half. Then came some small differences with Ferdinand and Isabella in Roussillon, which Charles had given up to them long before. He succeeded in checking their for-

[1] Commines, VIII. xxiii. (ii. p. 567).

ward movement, if indeed they meant seriously to threaten Languedoc. The matter was ended by a truce.

At the end of these affairs a strange seriousness fell on him. 'He turned his thoughts towards living after God's commandments and setting straight Justice and the Church, and ordering well his finances. He desired to live solely of his domain, which was plentifully great if well managed, and to levy from his people only the twelve hundred thousand francs which had been granted him at Tours by the Three Estates for the defence of the realm. Also he reformed the abuses of the religious orders, and listened gladly to good preachers: moreover he did much charity at the last. He established a public audience, at which he heard all who came, specially the poor, and sometimes gave two good hours to it.' He reproved the misconduct of his servants[1], and seems to have regretted the faults and licence of his own life.

One claim to distinction this poor King enjoys: he was the first who introduced into France the arts of Italy. At the Castle of Amboise on the Loire he gladly employed those artificers, sculptors, and painters, whom he had brought from Naples, beginning the 'greatest building that any king had attempted for a century past'—the 'enterprise of a young prince, and one who thought not upon death, but hoped for length of days.' In which he was sore deceived, for death was already lying in wait for him. One day in April, 1498, he went with Anne of Brittany, his queen, to see men playing tennis in the castle ditch; but, passing through a dark and dirty gallery on the way thither, he struck his head against a broken doorway. At first he seemed unhurt, for he stayed a long time watching the players and chatting with the bystanders. Suddenly, however, he fell, and lost all power of speech. They laid him down in the squalid gallery, stretched on a mattrass, till he died some nine hours later.

He had been but a poor King for France. Still, he was gentle of nature, and showed a real desire at the end of his life

[1] Commines, VIII. xxv. (ii. 587, 588).

to do what was right. 'He spent two or three years visiting his realm up and down, leading a good and holy life, and maintaining justice, so much so that his subjects were well content therewith.' The people, easily touched by gracious speech and act, lamented him as a friend. 'He was so good that kindlier creature was not to be seen,' says Commines[1]; 'no man was ever so humane and gentle of speech. I think he never said a word to hurt any man's feelings.' And yet he had treated Commines with the severity he deserved; and his testimony is therefore not that of a partisan.

He had had three children, who all died before him in early childhood. There were but few princes of the blood-royal surviving when he expired. His heir was Louis of Orleans, grandson of the brother of Charles VI, and accordingly three generations away from the Crown. Still, he was at once recognised as King without a murmur, The principle of hereditary succession was triumphantly established in France.

[1] Commines, VIII. xxvii. (ii. p. 595).

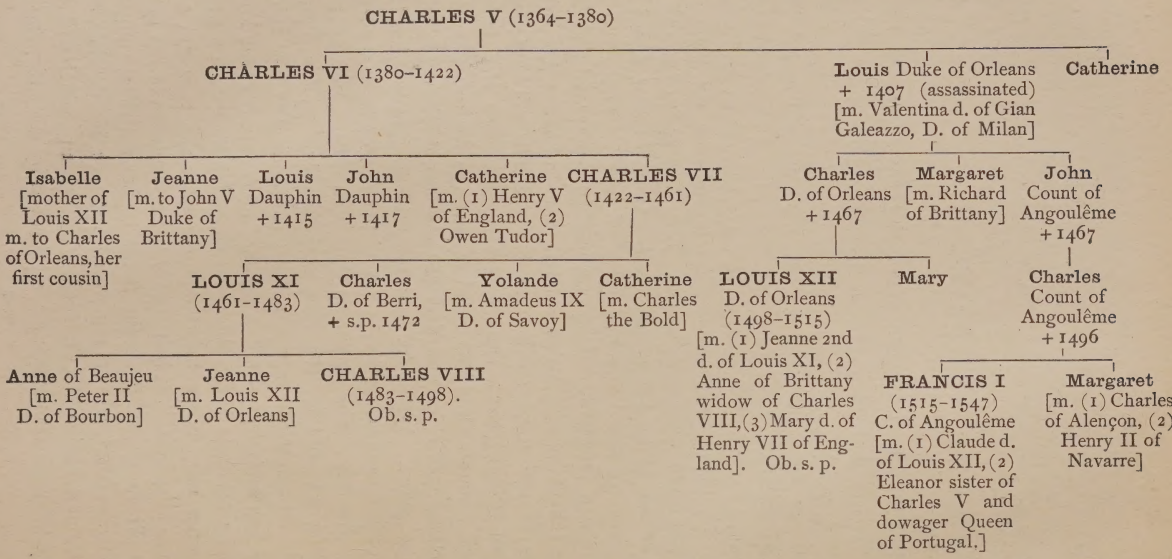
CHAPTER II.

Further Relations with Italy. Reign of Louis XII. A.D. 1498–1507.

Louis of Orleans, who was at Blois when Charles VIII died, hastened down to Amboise, made the arrangements for the King's funeral, and returned quickly whence he had come. When the time for his coronation arrived, the six lay peers could not all be mustered, and the King was obliged to call in three nobles to fill the vacant seats. It is singular also how the Princes of the Lilies had withered away. There was no male heir to Burgundy. Bourbon was sixty years old and had no son; Brittany and Anjou were in female hands; the other princes of the royal stock were but children. The Queen, Anne of Brittany, made show of great grief. She clad herself in black, though white was royal mourning; for two days she ate nothing, nor slept, and declared she would follow the King into the grave. When his old favourite and counsellor Briçonnet came to comfort her, he found her crouching in a corner of her chamber. She answered only with sobs. Yet her true mourning was not for the King's person, but for his dignity and his crown, which now she must put off. For her ruling quality was ambition; and at the age of twenty-one she knew that the world was before her, and wasted little time on grief. No sooner were her comforters gone than she rose up, and began to busy herself in behalf of the independence of her great Duchy, which, according to the terms of her marriage-compact with Charles VIII, was to remain with her on his death. She at once re-established the Chancellerie of Brittany, which Charles had suppressed, thus assuring to the Duchy an independent

TABLE II.—PEDIGREE OF CHARLES VIII, LOUIS XII, AND FRANCIS I.

(For the earlier Pedigree of the House of Valois see Vol. I. opposite p. 190.)


CHARLES V (1364–1380)
CHARLES VI (1380–1422)
Louis Duke of Orleans + 1407 (assassinated) [m. Valentina d. of Gian Galeazzo, D. of Milan]
Catherine
Isabelle [mother of Louis XII m. to Charles of Orleans, her first cousin]
Jeanne [m. to John V Duke of Brittany]
Louis Dauphin + 1415
John Dauphin + 1417
Catherine [m. (1) Henry V of England, (2) Owen Tudor]
CHARLES VII (1422–1461)
Charles D. of Orleans + 1467
Margaret [m. Richard of Brittany]
John Count of Angoulême + 1467
LOUIS XI (1461–1483)
Charles D. of Berri, + s.p. 1472
Yolande [m. Amadeus IX D. of Savoy]
Catherine [m. Charles the Bold]
LOUIS XII D. of Orleans (1498–1515) [m. (1) Jeanne 2nd d. of Louis XI, (2) Anne of Brittany widow of Charles VIII, (3) Mary d. of Henry VII of England]. Ob. s. p.
Mary
Charles Count of Angoulême + 1496
Anne of Beaujeu [m. Peter II D. of Bourbon]
Jeanne [m. Louis XII D. of Orleans]
CHARLES VIII (1483–1498). Ob. s. p.
FRANCIS I (1515–1547) C. of Angoulême [m. (1) Claude d. of Louis XII, (2) Eleanor sister of Charles V and dowager Queen of Portugal.]
Margaret [m. (1) Charles of Alençon, (2) Henry II of Navarre]

The County of Orleans, an arrière-fief of Hugh Capet, was given as apanage (1) by Philip VI to Philip his fourth son in 1344, and (2) by Charles V to Louis his second son in 1392; this erected the House of Orleans-Valois, which brought the fief back to the crown on the accession of Louis XII in 1498. Next, Louis XIII again detached the Duchy and gave it to his brother Gaston, who died childless in 1660. The Duchy then passed to Philip, brother of Louis XIV, who founded the house of Orleans-Bourbon, which came to the throne of France in 1830.

administration. She left Amboise, returning to her Bretons, among whom she again began to exercise acts of sovereignty; she struck money, issued edicts, convoked the Estates of the Duchy. In fine, she played her cards so well that ere Charles had been dead two months she had promised once more to become Queen of France, as soon as Louis XII could free himself from the wife he already had.

That wife was Jeanne, sister of the late King, a worthy and pious woman, but plain. Louis had ceased to live with her; they had no children. There was no excuse for a divorce; nor can it be justified in any way. But right had to yield to 'reasons of state'; and as Alexander VI, the reigning Pontiff, desired to advance the fortunes of Cæsar, his favourite son, he readily granted the required divorce. Cæsar, who brought the Bull into France, was rewarded by being made Duke of Valentinois [1], with a large pension, a bride of the great House of Albret, and ready promises of support in his Italian schemes, where he aimed at founding an independent principality for himself in the Romagna. All obstacles, including the poor Queen Jeanne, being thus easily removed, a splendid marriage followed. It was a piece of scandalous and cruel trafficking, though useful for France. Anne of Brittany, according to the terms of her contract with Charles VIII, in which it was written that if the King died she should marry his heir, now once more became Queen of France by marrying Louis XII (A.D. 1499).

She secured her own retreat in case of any mishap: the terms of her marriage-compact with Louis were more stringent than those of her agreement with Charles VIII; her Duchy remained as an independent State; on her death it should pass to her second son or to her eldest daughter, or failing these to her own heirs; nor should the Kings of France have any hold thereon [2].

With these fortunate auspices Louis XII began his reign.

[1] He is henceforth called 'Duc de Valentinois' in French histories.

[2] Preuves de l'Histoire de Bretagne, tom. iii, quoted by La Vallée, Histoire des Français, ii. 269.

His character is not quite easy to trace: there was so much good nature with such obvious callousness of heart, such admirable rule at home, with such narrowness of views and errors of judgment abroad; such humanity on the one hand and harshness in war on the other; such an insignificant and self-indulgent life before he came to the throne, and so notably public-spirited a career after he became King; that we may well feel puzzled by him. These apparent contradictions are all clearly marked in his character. It is most probable that his fame for good or ill depends chiefly on the characters of the men nearest his person: the good at home may be largely due to his great minister George of Amboise; the evil abroad to his consort Anne. Our difficulty is increased by the unworthiness of the historians of his time; they are mere panegyrists of princes and great captains. When they do not chronicle fighting-bouts, they turn to description of feasting-bouts; they give us few and meagre hints as to the characters of men, or the home-life of peoples; little about art or science or knowledge. It is singular how their eyes are closed against the great movements of the time; they cannot hear the mutterings of the storm of the Reformation, they know little of the marvels of discovery daily reported from afar. The keel of Columbus once more touched the western shores in the very year in which Louis XII came to the throne, but who among French historians or memoir-writers of the day notices the fact? Alexander VI in 1493 had divided the world by a line drawn from North to South down the Atlantic, and with high hand granted all Eastern discovery to Portugal, all Western to Spain[1]. Yet France heeded it not, engrossed in her schemes against ill-fated Italy, and unconscious that the Papacy was claiming a world-empire such as had never before been dreamt of.

As a younger man Louis XII had been lazy, frivolous, and debauched. Much of his later career was affected by these faults; and even to the end of his life he was a great eater and

[1] The line was first drawn 100 leagues west of Azores: the Pope at a later time moved it 270 leagues farther westward.

drinker[1]. He leant on favourites to save himself trouble; he never took the pains to understand even the simplest lines of the somewhat intricate web of Italian politics in which he did not fear to entangle himself.

One sees something of all this in his face. He was a strange-looking man; there seemed to be hardly any upper part to his head; his forehead was very low: he had a big blunt ill-shapen nose, with huge lips, loose and flabby, under it. There was not much flesh on his face; yet the general effect was that of a stout man, thanks to the largeness of his pendant cheeks and features, compared with the smallness of his forehead. It is a friendly humorous countenance: the general impression it leaves is that of a kindly and sensible man, heavy of nature and self-indulgent.

We so seldom meet with a monarch who really cared for his people, that the heart is drawn towards this humane and easy-going prince. It is touching to notice his desire to be his country's father, to watch his tears when the deputation of the Estates of Tours in 1506 saluted him Pater Patriae. Heartless he seemed to be and was in the matter of his divorce, the meek face of the much-wronged Princess Jeanne, a saint in public esteem ere she died, must have haunted him sometimes. But towards his people, and towards the nobles around him, he was kind, feeling, and generous. 'It would but ill become the King of France,' said he, 'to avenge the wrongs of the Duke of Orleans.' Consequently, he confirmed all the officers of his predecessor in their places; even Louis de la Trémoille, who had made him prisoner at Saint Aubin[2], was received into favour, and became one of the worthiest and most trusted servants of the Crown. In former days he had been opposed to Anne of Beaujeu, and had felt the weight of her strong hand; she had kept him in prison

[1] When Louis XII once complained that Ferdinand of Aragon had twice deceived him, that false prince retorted with exultation, 'He lies, *the drunkard!* I have cheated him more than ten times!'

[2] See above, p. 107, and Mémoires de la Trémoille, ch. viii. Collect. Univ. xiv. p. 155.

three years. Nevertheless, no sooner was he king than he invited her and her husband to Blois, treated them with the greatest kindness, and even did for them things which seemed likely to injure the unity of the state. Louis XI, when he gave his daughter to Peter of Bourbon, had stipulated that if the great Duchy of Bourbon eventually came to him, and if after that he were to die without heirs male, that important fief, though it was really a female fief, should not descend to the daughters, but should revert to the Crown. And now, as Duke Peter had no sons, but only a daughter Susanne, this event seemed to be imminent. Louis XII might have hoped soon to have grasped this Duchy; on the contrary he renounced his claim to set aside the female line [1]; and these great estates accordingly fell to Susanne, who, marrying her cousin Charles, afterwards the famous Constable Bourbon, carried them all over to him. To this honourable transaction, as well as to the intrigues of Louise of Savoy [2], may be traced the treason of the Constable, which marks with so dark a line the history of the reign of Francis I. The Parliament of Paris, perhaps more foreseeing than Louis XII, long resisted before it would register the act of renunciation.

But though the King could pardon and make friends of those who had wronged him and were still alive, he could not reconcile himself with the memory of his great predecessor Louis XI. That monarch, following his general policy, had steadily depressed the House of Orleans; and Louis XII, being the representative of that House, favoured a reaction against the tendencies of the former reign. Repression at home and non-interference abroad had been the principle of the policy of Louis XI; and now Louis XII seems to have been minded both to interfere in external affairs and to abate the autocratic tendencies of the monarchy at home. He wished to rule humanely, and to raise his people out of the mire; he was not afraid to allow the great feudal Houses once more to lift up the head; he declined to

[1] His Letters Patent in favour of Susanna of Bourbon are given in the Histoire généalogique et chronologique de la maison royale de France, iii. 137.

[2] See below, p. 196.

interfere in clerical elections. Under his benign and sunny rule people, clergy, nobles, all rose to a higher sense of their duties and position. Had his reign been followed by that of a prince equally large-spirited, we might have had to write down Louis XII as the founder of true constitutional life in France.

His kindliness showed itself also in other ways. When the players at the Basoche in Paris satirised him to his face, and brought him on the stage, ill and calling for a drink of molten gold, he only laughed and let the thing pass by. When it was a question of money to be raised, he tried every expedient rather than add one penny to the burdens of his people. He had promised to solace the poor folk, and did so effectually. It was wonderful to see the country-people flocking round him, and running for miles to see him wherever he went; they made a kind of worship of it, struggling and fighting to get near him, so as, if possible, to touch his robe or his hand[1]. He was, as a Venetian ambassador said, 'a child of nature'; there was something wonderfully fresh, natural, and winning about him[2]. He accordingly disliked persecution, and when the primitive inhabitants of the upper valleys of Dauphiny were suffering from the oppression of certain zealous churchmen, he sent thither a commission to enquire into the matter. His officers reported that the simple mountaineers were good believers; and the King gladly commanded the churchmen to hold their hands.

That he might know how to rule aright, he read diligently, almost daily, in Cicero's Books of Offices: as one result, he had the state of justice in the realm much at heart, and in 1499 caused a grand Ordonnance, the result of the labours of his Great Council[3], to be issued at Blois. He also set an excellent

[1] S. Gelais, Histoire de Louis XII, pp. 225–227; quoted in Collect. Univ. xvi. p. 352.

[2] L. von Ranke, Französische Geschichte, i. p. 68.

[3] The Great Council had been established by Charles VIII in 1497, and confirmed by Louis XII in 1498; it was intended to be a counterpoise to the Parliament of Paris, and also to assist the King in matters of reform of justice. It was composed of the Chancellor with twenty counsellors and the Maîtres des Requêtes de l'Hôtel du Roy; its sessions were styled 'Estates,' but they were very different from the States-General.

example of frugality at Court; he much reduced the customary gifts to courtiers, and brought the whole finance of the land into good order; his expenses came to only half as much as those of Louis XI. Yet he also reorganised the fighting-power, and created a strong army[1]. He stopped all pillage and extortion by soldiers, and made peace throughout France; no civic stir vexed the growth of towns, no high-handed prince defied the King or took the law into his own hands, or raised the standard of private war. So greatly did the well-being of the people advance, that one-third of the realm is said to have been brought under cultivation in his day.

Like Charles VII, Louis XII might have been styled 'the well-served.' He had favourites, but they were fortunate accidents for France, so far as her internal happiness was concerned. Chief of these was George of Amboise, Archbishop of Rouen, 'the properest man to be made Pope that ever I saw,' says Fleuranges[2], 'whether in matter of sense, or of good conscience, or of manner of life.' He was an old and tried friend of the King, in evil and good fortune alike; so long as he lived he was the true ruler of France, and his rule was prudent and kindly. The only man with whom at first he shared power was the Marshal Peter of Gié, of the great Breton House of Rohan, who, unlike most ministers of the age, had held his own under Louis XI, Charles VIII, and lastly for some eight years under Louis XII. But George of Amboise and the Queen, after the King's illness in 1504, determined to punish the true patriotism of the veteran, the trusted friend of their kings, and compassed his fall in the interests of the House of Austria[3]: from that time Amboise ruled alone till his death in 1510.

But neither Louis XII, nor his ambitious minister, nor his proud Queen understood the true interests of France abroad. Louis seemed to care more for his claim on Milan than for his kingship at home. Amboise, as has been said of Wolsey, whom

[1] See below, p. 141 and note 3.
[2] Mémoires de Fleuranges, Collect. Univ. xvi. p. 37.
[3] See below, pp. 148, 150.

he resembled in many points, guided all his foreign policy by his ambition to be Pope; while Anne of Brittany, haughty, obstinate, and narrow of views, was no Frenchwoman: 'the air of France did not agree with her'; and she too neglected the true interests of her husband's crown. No wonder that the easy King, with his small intelligence and his ignorance, was led astray. Under their guidance, and with help of a very baleful friend, Cæsar Borgia, he committed blunder on blunder, plunged France into disastrous war, swerved from side to side, attacked his best friends, trusted the untrustworthy, and at last handed over to his ill-fated successor the luckless heritage of Italian ambitions and interference. Abroad he seemed to have an instinctive dislike to all free people or free institutions; his hatred for Venice is like the bitterness with which Louis XIV regarded the burghers of Amsterdam: he did all the harm he could to Florence and to Pisa, to Genoa, and the Swiss.

His First Italian War.

No sooner was the King wedded to Anne of Brittany than his mind returned to those Italian questions which had so much occupied him of old. When Charles VIII had pushed on into lower Italy, Louis had lingered in the Milanese territory; now the territory became the key of French policy. No longer the Angevin claims on the kingdom of Naples, but the somewhat shadowy claim of Louis of Orleans on Milan engrossed all thoughts. We must see what that claim was worth.

Louis, Duke of Orleans, younger brother of Charles VI, married in 1389, Valentina Visconti, daughter of Gian Galeazzo, Duke of Milan[1]; and in the marriage-compact it was agreed that if heirs male failed to Gian, the descendants of Valentine should succeed to the Duchy. This case had occurred. The male line of the Visconti came to an end, and Louis XII, grandson of Valentine, now claimed the Ducal

[1] See Table II. p. 132.

throne. He styled himself at his coronation King of France, and also King of the Two Sicilies, and of Jerusalem, and Duke of Milan, thus combining in his person the claims of both branches of his family, and proclaiming in Europe the vast breadth of his ambition.

This claim of Louis XII on Milan was met by several competitors: (1) King Wenceslas, when conferring this great fief on Gian Galeazzo, had by an Imperial Bull expressly declared that it should not descend in the female line; and accordingly the Empire claimed the Lordship of Milan, as having escheated to its grantor on failure of male heirs; (2) the Sforza family had been in possession, and both Louis XI and Charles VIII had recognised them by making alliances with them; (3) the proud city itself declared that she too had a right to be consulted as to who should rule over her; and (4), lastly, as a fact, Milan was under the government of that successful usurper, Lodovico, surnamed Il Moro; a prince of mark, vigorous and not unkindly, though his government was oppressive and his taxation heavy[1]. Milan from her position was a great temptation to her neighbours. The French overshadowed her from one side, the Swiss from the other; if any strong man held Milan, he could threaten the whole valley of the Po, and might become the most formidable of Italian princes. To win this position was the aim and ambition of Louis XII.

Nor did the moment seem ill-chosen. The French were not weary of Italian expeditions: 'they were a kind of festival[2]' for the lively, noble, and wild 'adventurer'; they were a benefit to France, so far as they turned the eyes of these turbulent classes from her, and left her in peace. For a twelvemonth Louis XII occupied himself with negociations and intrigues; it is the time at which France plunged into that great whirlpool of

[1] Lodovico il Moro was uncle of Gian Galeazzo Maria, Duke of Milan, whom he made away with and succeeded in 1494. Lodovico was the son of Francesco Alessandro Sforza, who had married the daughter of Filippo Maria Visconti, Duke of Milan, and had succeeded him as Duke in 1450. The surname 'Il Moro' is said to come from his cognisance, a mulberry-tree.

[2] L. von Ranke, Französische Geschichte, vol. i. p. 67.

foreign relations, in which her King was before long to make so many blunders. It was wonderful how the Italian princes turned round: the foes of Charles VIII mostly became the allies of Louis XII. The House of Borgia, we know, was already friendly. The divorce, so readily granted, had carried with it high hopes for Cæsar; the French would help him to his Romagna princedom. He and his father Alexander VI therefore smiled on the proposed conquest of Milan. Florence and Venice[1] were both French in sympathy; Savoy threw open the majestic portals of Italy. The Emperor Maximilian, who naturally would have opposed the attack, or might have tried to get, by means of it, a firmer footing on Eastern Italy, was, as usual, engaged elsewhere, for he had led a great Germanic army into Eastern Switzerland[2] at this very time, and had not only ignominiously failed, but had so completely exhausted himself as to be quite powerless. Louis also made treaties with Philip of Austria, with Ferdinand of Aragon, with Henry VII of England; and finally he took care to send emissaries to Luzern to the Swiss, who closed a bargain for the hire of twelve thousand of their formidable mercenaries.

The King's army gathered at Lyons, the natural resting-place before one plunges into the heart of the great mountains. It was composed of fifteen hundred lances[3] (about eight thou-

[1] Venetian envoys in 1499 came to Étampes to negociate the arrangements for the fall and partition of the Milanese.

[2] We have a delightful account of this expedition from honest Bilibald Pirckheimer, who commanded a force of Nürembergers in this little war. See Pirckheimer's Works (ed. 1610, pp. 63–92).

[3] The cavalry, main part of an old French army, was thus organised. Charles VII established his Compagnies d'Ordonnance in 1425. Each company was one hundred lances, each lance had with him five men; so that each full company was 600 strong. There were fifteen companies; his whole force nominally amounting to 9000 horse. To these must be added a host of volunteers, who sometimes equalled the regular troops in numbers. It was a great honour to be one of the King's Gens d'Armes; they were all gentle (to the time of Louis XII), and were in fact the old Ban and Arrière-ban. In later days a company was 150 strong—50 men-at-arms and 100 archers. Under Francis I there were eight men to a lance; but the proportion varied. The Gens d'Armes were heavy-armed soldiers, mounted on big-boned horses called 'destriers.' The archers, pages, valets, knifemen, in attendance were light troops. Each company was under its captain, and had a lieutenant and other lesser officers. The growth of

sand horsemen in all), of the twelve thousand Swiss, and of a fine artillery. The host was commanded by Aubigny and Trivulzio. The King expected to receive reinforcements on his way, otherwise this army would seem to be singularly weak. Three hundred lances (sixteen hundred horse) and four thousand Swiss were sent to aid Cæsar Borgia in the Romagna. It was also agreed that the Venetians should vex the Eastern frontier of the Milan territory.

No sooner had the army appeared in Lombardy than all towns opened their gates; the nobles who led the army of Lodovico abandoned him; Milan rose against him; he fled to Tyrol, while the French entered the city almost without a blow. The King's success was as rapid and bloodless as that of his predecessor. Trivulzio, being an Italian, and therefore likely to be acceptable to the inhabitants, was made Governor of Milan; and Louis XII, while he stayed there, won high esteem by good laws and justice well administered. When, however, he left the city, and returned to France, Trivulzio, instead of ruling prudently, violently attacked the Ghibelline or dominant party in Milan.

Early in 1500 things were ripe for revolt. Lodovico returned with a great host of Swiss ruffians; the French garrisons were swept away; and Trivulzio, not without great difficulty, extricated himself from Milan and withdrew to Mortara. It was on this retreat that the famous Bayard, having pushed back the Italians, in the heat of pursuit followed them into Milan, and was taken there and brought before Lodovico, who treated him with great courtesy and let him go free. Bayard, the most prominent figure of the war-scenes of this age, the prince of French

light cavalry was very slow, and is connected with the advance of artillery. At first the chief light troops were mercenaries, Stradiots or Albanians. As for infantry, Louis XI had an army of 6000 Swiss and 10,000 French foot. Charles VIII and Louis XII added more Swiss and German Landsknechts. After the Peace of Madrid Francis I reorganised the infantry; made each 'ensign' consist of a body of not more than 400 men. He introduced the name of legions, and wished to raise seven legions of 6000 men each. But it did not work. The word Regiment (apparently used as equivalent to legion) came in about the middle of the sixteenth century.

captains, came of a Dauphiny family renowned for its prowess. His ancestors and kinsmen had shed their blood at Azincourt, at Verneuil, at Montleheri, at Guinegate; he himself lived only for the battlefield, and there found his rest. He was born at the castle of Bayard, a short day's journey from Grenoble, and early showed his eagerness for a career of arms. His uncle the Bishop of Grenoble got a place for him as page to the Duke of Savoy, by whom he was afterwards 'given' to Charles VIII. The record by his panegyrist, the 'Loyal Serviteur,' of his start in the world is very fresh and pretty. His uncle came to Bayard, and offered to take the boy, who was then fourteen years of age, back with him. Thereon all was in ferment. The tailor of the township was sent for, and all night long the good man sat up working at 'velvet, satin, and other things needful to clothe the good knight.' The bishop provided a lively little roan; the boy mounted, dressed in his new clothes; his mother was called down to see him start. She brought a purse, with six crowns of gold in it, and a crown in lesser coin, for him; also a little valise with the needful linen. She gave him two crowns for the servant of the squire under whom he might be placed. And, above all, through her tears, she charged him simply and eloquently to bear himself wisely and well; to love and serve God, to be courteous to his peers, and merciful to the poor; to tell the truth, to be sober and free from envy or flattery or talebearing; to be loyal, loving, and liberal. The lad made grave reply, beyond his years; and then, his uncle the Bishop calling him, he rode away into the world a happy, lively boy. 'Finding himself astride of his well-bred roan, he deemed himself in Paradise,' and went off, forgetting the kind and aching hearts he left behind in the dull little castle of Bayard.

At Mortara Trivulzio was reinforced by a large body of Swiss and French, under La Trémoille and George of Amboise. Meanwhile Lodovico had re-entered Milan in triumph, and had seized Novara: there the French army blockaded him. On both sides were large bodies of Swiss: a most unseemly chaffering

and bargaining went on, the mountaineers threatening to abandon their employers if they did not pay them more. They were clearly unwilling, then as later, to be found on both sides in the day of battle, though they were ready enough to take the money of both. The result was that the Swiss in Novara agreed to betray Lodovico, and did so, by feigning to come out of the town to fight the French, and then by capitulating without a blow. The unfortunate Duke was found disguised among them; he was carried to France, treated with the utmost harshness by Louis XII, and imprisoned at Loches. There he languished till death released him ten years later. He was an industrious and eloquent person, kindly and gracious; vain also, false, and passionate. On their return to their homes, the Swiss, carrying great wealth with them, secured Bellinzona, which up to 1499 had belonged to the Duchy of Milan; and the town has been Swiss ever since.

The allies of France, Venice, Florence, and Rome, got each a share of the plunder. Venice received Cremona and an additional strip of territory; Florence got leave to crush the independence of Pisa. A force of Swiss and six hundred French lances were sent to besiege the town, but the Pisans overwhelmed their would-be foes with caresses and provisions; and the impulsive Frenchmen abandoned the attack, leaving Pisa free. She was but reserved to prove still more clearly in 1509 how shameless and heartless the policy of Louis XII could be.

Cæsar Borgia, the third ally, now rose to the height of his fortunes. With French aid he mastered the Romagna, where the people were thankful to be rid of their petty tyrants. Pitiless as his rule was towards all who were in any way his rivals or obnoxious to him, the condition of the common folk improved under his eye; his administration was good and enlightened; and his manners delightful and winning. Louis XII could not believe that so agreeable a man, with such charming manners, could possibly be cruel and heartless. No cat purring by the winter fireside could be softer

or gentler, or seem to think less of her claws and the mice. Macchiavelli saw in him the strong man destined to pluck Italy out of the hand of the foreigner. To such a man all things, he thought, could be forgiven. Cæsar balanced himself adroitly, unscrupulously, even gracefully, as long as his father lived; and had he not been stricken down with illness when the catastrophe overtook Alexander VI in 1503, his acute admirer thinks he would have established himself as a temporal prince. But his illness came at the critical moment, and he was unable to contest the Papal election; strong-handed Julius II became Pope and speedily overthrew him. Cæsar escaped to Gonzalvo of Cordova, the Spanish commander in Italy, who sent him a prisoner to Spain, where he died. And thus ended the intrigues, the crimes, and great ambitions of the Borgias.

Nothing can be more intricate, confused, and sometimes resultless, than the trafficking and negociation of this age. It was a time of strange and unexpected whirlings of the political wheel. One cannot discern any real policy in the moves of Louis XII, or anything better than low cunning in the tricks and intrigues of Ferdinand the Catholic, that falsest of princes. Cardinal George of Amboise, who chiefly controlled the French King, however wise and prudent at home, was an unsafe guide abroad. He had been the connecting link between Louis and Cæsar Borgia; and had reckoned on Cæsar's help on the death of Alexander VI, hoping thereby to become Pope, and proposing to repay Cæsar by aiding him in his grand schemes of Italian domination. But Maximilian, the Emperor-Elect, saw through him, and did his best to thwart his plans. He had little wish to see a French Pope: he may have already dreamt of securing the hold of Germany in Italy by grasping the tiara for himself, though he did not put the wild idea of an Emperor-Pope into words till a later time. Throughout, we must not look for anything higher than selfish ambition and a desire to grasp one's neighbour's territory. The system which presently steadied itself into the Balance of Power was still in its infancy: and statecraft, in which each sought to outwit

others, seemed to have taken the place of force. There were no principles to guide the movements of princes; the acquisition of this or that province, with no regard to the natural limits of nations, was the aim which each Prince set before himself, and for which he fought, intrigued, and lied. It is clear therefore that defenceless Italy must be the country which would attract most attention. Her unhappy condition, her well-marked subdivisions, the balance between her little principalities, all were temptations to the foreign 'barbarian.' The Frenchman, the Spaniard, the German, the Swiss, all struggled to get firm foothold on her soil. The natural points of attack were the Piedmontese districts, Genoa, and Milan, for the French; the Milanese, for the Swiss; the Lombard plain and Venice, for the Germans; Naples with Sicily, for the Spaniards. The blunders of Louis XII were chiefly caused by his exceeding ambition. He stretched too far for his strength, not limiting himself to northern Italy; and, by grasping at Venice or Naples, enabled the Germans or the Spaniards to secure themselves firmly in the Peninsula.

His Second Italian War.

Thus, for example, what could have been more short-sighted or baser than the Treaty of Granada, by which, in 1500, Louis XII and Ferdinand the Catholic agreed to despoil the unfortunate Frederick of Naples of his possessions by a trick worthy of a gang of petty thieves? It was agreed that Louis alone should attack Naples, the treaty being kept secret; then Frederick would be sure to call in his kinsman Ferdinand. Ferdinand would come, and being admitted into the strongholds of his luckless friend as a deliverer, would seize them forcibly and then divide the spoil with Louis. It was agreed that Louis should have Naples, the Terra di Lavoro, and the Abruzzi, with the title of King of Naples and Jerusalem; while Ferdinand should have Apulia and Calabria, as Duke. Meanwhile, to make all safe, Ferdinand sent a message to Frederick assuring him with an oath that he would defend him. Unfortu-

nately Frederick, as 'il Moro' of Milan had done before, appealed to Bajazet II for protection; the weaker princes liking better to call in the Turk, than to fall defenceless victims to their Christian enemies. This was made a pretext for war; Louis and Ferdinand raised forces for a crusade, the former declaring that he would conquer Naples, as an outpost against the infidel. By assiduous negociation he had secured the neutrality of Maximilian; the young Archduke Philip of Austria, who was in the Netherlands, which were now rising into a power in Europe distinct from both Germany and Spain, wished only for quiet and prosperity. Frederick, abandoned and betrayed by all, could make no resistance, and submitted to Louis; he was carried into France, where he died. The French and Spaniards divided his kingdom, as they had agreed (A.D. 1501). The thieves very soon began to fall out. Louis of Armagnac, Duke of Nemours, Viceroy for France, was unequal to his task. A petty war began; the French forces, never large, were weakened; yet for a while they not only kept the Spaniards at bay, but drove them out of almost all the mainland. Long negociations went on in France, guided by the Archduke Philip. He made a treaty; but Ferdinand, who had gained time enough, refused to ratify it; his reinforcements had reached Naples; the French army was beaten, and lost all but Venosa and Gaieta. Then Louis raised money by sale of offices, beginning that deplorable system which afterwards became so conspicuous an element in the finance of Francis I, an abuse which was paralleled only in the Papal Curia. He also contracted a loan,—for he would do anything rather than inflict taxes on the French people,—and with the proceeds raised two armies, one for Roussillon, which failed to make any impression; the other for Naples, to relieve the desperate remnant of the French force standing at bay at Venosa. This army, led by La Trémoille, had reached the Papal States, and had begun to treat with friendly Alexander VI, when that Pontiff's career was suddenly cut short. Julius II was elected Pope; and a new age seemed likely to open for Italy. Meanwhile La Trémoille pushed on and reached

the Garigliano, where he found the vigilant Gonzalvo awaiting him. For two months the Spaniard barred his passage; the French army melted away under influences of the terrible climate. At last La Trémoille was forced to retreat; then Gonzalvo fell on his weak and demoralised troops, and won an easy victory. The disaster was decisive. All the artillery was lost; the frightened relics of the army fled to Gaieta, where they soon capitulated. Louis of Ars, the kinsman and teacher of the famous Bayard, still held out in Venosa. At last he too had to abandon that stronghold; he made a heroic retreat, and brought his men safely through to France. The Borgias were gone; the French had lost all they had aimed at in the South; they had no friend in Italy except Florence.

The visit of the Archduke Philip to France had had one singular result. The French court was the centre of home-intrigues as well as of foreign negociations. On the one side was Anne of Brittany, who was jealous of Louise of Savoy and her son Francis of Angoulême, the heir presumptive to the Crown; Louise was supported at first by George of Amboise in a policy opposed to the national sympathies and aspirations of France. On the other side was the Marshal of Gié, the old and tried servant of the Crown, who, Breton though he was, desired to preserve the unity of the kingdom, and was anxious for the welfare of young Francis of Angoulême. For a time the Queen's party prevailed. The lazy King, led by his chief favourite—'laissez faire à Georges,' he used to say—agreed that his little daughter Claude should be betrothed to Charles of Austria, the eldest son of Philip, who was destined, as Charles V, to prove himself the most powerful prince and greatest statesman of the century[1]. The proposal was in reality hostile to both France and Spain, and grateful only to Germany; yet for awhile it seemed certain of success.

[1] In 1500 had died Don Miguel of Portugal, the only child of the eldest daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella. Hereby Charles of Austria became heir, as eldest son of the second daughter, to all the great inheritance of Don Miguel. How different might have been the development of European politics had Spain and Portugal been united by Don Miguel, and so clean dissevered from Austria and the Netherlands!

This proposed marriage was the basis of the three Treaties of Blois which mark the year 1504, treaties which contained the germ of the League of Cambrai, and which mark the first public appearance of the new school of modern European politics. The high contracting parties were the Emperor-Elect Maximilian, his son Philip for the Archduke Charles and Louis XII. Ferdinand, though Charles was his grandson[1], stood aloof: he did not desire the further aggrandisement of the Austrian House.

Now these three treaties were framed thus:—

(1) The first, to punish Venice and the new Pope Julius II, by seizing the mainland possessions of Venice, and by interfering with the Papal territories north and east of the Apennines.

(2) The second, to secure the Imperial investiture of Milan to Louis XII, and, in case of failure of heirs-male, to Claude his daughter, after she had been espoused to Charles of Austria.

(3) The third stipulated that Louis should give as dower to Claude (but not till after his own death) Milan and Brittany, Genoa, Asti, Blois, and, if he died without sons, even Burgundy.

The blunders in these treaties were so apparent that one can only wonder that even Louis XII allowed himself to be so completely misguided by his masterful spouse, with whom 'the air of France did not agree.' By the first treaty Maximilian secured his foothold in Italy; just as in 1500 the Treaty of Granada had

[1] TABLE III.—THE RELATIONSHIPS OF CHARLES V.

Maximilian I, Emperor-Elect and Archduke of **Austria** = **Mary** of **Burgundy**

Ferdinand, King of **Aragon** = **Isabella**, Queen of **Castille**

Philip the Handsome, Archduke of **Austria** and Duke of **Burgundy** = **Joanna** (2nd daughter), Queen of **Spain**

CHARLES
(I of Spain, V as Emperor),
who became (i) King of Spain (with his mother) 1516; (ii) Archduke of Austria; (iii) Heir to the possessions of the House of Burgundy (Netherlands and Franche Comté); (iv) King of Naples and Sicily; (v) Suzerain over the New World; (vi) Emperor (and therewith Suzerain over Milan, &c.) 1519.

handed Naples over to Spain. It is clear that Louis could only be safe in Milan, if he supported his natural ally, Venice, against her natural antagonist the Emperor. Instead of this he proposed by this first treaty to establish Maximilian in Italy at the expense of Venice. By the second and third treaties the absolute dismemberment of France was provided for: and a most powerful rival was to be established to the East, North and West of the kingdom, so as to revive all the memories of those past evils against which Louis XI had struggled so pertinaciously and with so much success. Fortunately, the follies of sovereigns, when they oppose the general tendencies of their age, are neutralised by forces stronger than themselves: and so it was with these three absurd and monstrous Treaties of Blois.

The next year (1505) Louis fell into the toils of crafty Ferdinand. The death of Isabella in 1504, who left her kingdom to her husband, and not to her daughter Joanna, had brought the jealousies between Ferdinand and Philip the Handsome to an open strife. The old monarch, seeing that Louis was inclined to befriend his son-in-law, proposed to make his peace with France. Louis agreed; and a treaty was signed by which the French King gave up his claims on Naples, stipulating that he should receive a considerable sum of money, and that Ferdinand should espouse Germaine of Foix[1]. The kingdom of Naples was in fact her dowry; if she died childless it was to return to the French crown. Whether in consequence of this treaty, or because of the general anxiety shown by all France on the subject, or because of his alarming illness, Louis began to think better of his promise that his daughter Claude should marry Charles of Austria. Thinking that he was dying, he made a will forbidding the alliance: and the old Marshal of Gié, fearing lest the Queen should force it on, carried off the young princess, and watched over her till the King, to the joy of all men, recovered. For this act he was dismissed into honourable exile; whereinto he carried with him the gratitude of France; for he had given time for public opinion to find

[1] Niece of Louis XII.

means of expression, and had prevented the possibility of so great a blunder.

That expression of opinion came early in 1506, on the meeting of the Estates at Tours. It was a kind of intrigue of the whole country joined with the King, against the influence of Anne of Brittany. As in the days of Louis XI the States General of 1468 were convoked to enable the King to retain Normandy[1], so now Louis XII called his Estates together to help him out of his engagement with Philip of Austria. They were not, strictly speaking, States General, for there were no proper elections held; the third Estate was represented by deputies sent by different public bodies, courts of justice, civic and other corporations. They met at Tours; for the Loire was then far more the centre of the kingdom than the Seine, and for the last hundred years the French Court had not been settled at Paris. The King was at Plessis-lez-Tours; deputies from the Estates, who were quite unanimous, visited him there; and, after saluting him as 'Father of his Fatherland,' besought him on their knees to bestow the hand of his daughter on 'Francis, there present, who is a thorough son of France[2].'

The King, in tears, the deputies weeping also, replied through the Chancellor that he would consult the lords of the blood-royal and his Council, professing that the matter was new and strange to him; which was a gratuitous falsehood. He then dismissed them, and on a later day summoned them again, and announced to them that their wish was granted, and that the betrothal should take place forthwith. Accordingly, two days afterwards, Francis of Angoulême, a boy of eleven years, was betrothed to Claude of France, a child of six. The peril was averted; the assembly broke up with joyful hearts; and thus 'Fortunate Austria' just missed one of the most splendid matches which could have been inscribed on the triumphant marriage-roll of her House.

[1] See above, pp. 64, 65.

[2] 'À savoir qu'il vous plaise donner madame votre fille unique à Monsieur *François*, ci présent, qui est tout *François*.'

CHAPTER III.

The Period of the Two Leagues.

A.D. 1507–1515.

We must turn to less prosperous affairs: for we are coming to the time of the League of Cambrai.

Third Italian War of Louis XII.

The tendencies which led to that League date from the repression by Louis XII of the popular rising and Republican institutions of Genoa in 1507. That town, goaded to fury by the impertinence of the young nobles[1], and encouraged by Julius II, by the Venetians, and by the Emperor-Elect Maximilian, had overthrown the government of the aristocracy. Now the nobles had set up the lilies of France in public places, and had vaunted that they were under French protection; accordingly when they fell, the other party hoisted the Imperial eagle, and tore the lilies down. Hereupon Louis XII hastened to strike a vigorous blow: for the loss of Genoa endangered his foothold at Milan; Genoa being the second doorway for France into Italy[2]. He swiftly crossed the Alps, then the Apennines; Genoa surrendered at discretion. The French King treated the place with much severity (he was benign nowhere but at home), executing the chiefs of the republican party, and heavily taxing the city; he declared that the Lordship of Genoa was united to the royal domain, and should henceforth be ruled directly by France.

[1] Jean d'Autun, Hist. de Louis XII, p. 47, A. 1506, gives a graphic account of this revolution, writing however as a partisan of the Nobles.

[2] Pinerolo was the first.

The effect on Italy was electrical. Julius II at once sought the friendship of Louis, who in return helped him to seize Bologna, that coveted prize of papal ambition, a northern outwork of the temporal power. The town had long been dissevered from the States of the Church, and had hitherto leant on France. There, as elsewhere in Italy, Louis never knew his friends from his foes, or, rather, seems equally to have despised and disliked them all. Ferdinand of Aragon sent his congratulations, and promised the powerful minister Amboise the fulfilment of his high ambitions, assuring him that he should be the next Pope.

Maximilian, standing aloof from all this movement, descended from his mountains to attack Venice, and reached Trent, where he was arrested as usual by lack of funds. Venice called on Louis for help, proposing that they should together attack the Imperial army at Trent; this the King refused: then the Senate, left alone, and aware of the ominous stipulations of the Treaty of Blois, made a private truce with the Emperor, without naming the King of France. Glad of a pretext, Louis saw in this omission an insult which could not be overlooked. The haughty Republic was highhanded, rich, and prosperous: her aristocratic and solid policy was only too persevering and successful; her influence at sea overwhelming, her power on shore too near the Milanese border: her rule was much beloved by her subjects 'by reason of her even-handed justice.' All the powers around, a ring of wolves, glared on the fair city with angry covetous eyes. On the south of her territory the Papacy wanted the cities Venice had won when Cæsar Borgia fell: along the south-eastern coast lay her convenient ports, Brindisi, Otranto, Gallipoli, which Ferdinand coveted; on the north Maximilian claimed the old shadowy rights of empire over Vicenza, Padua, and Verona, keys of the descent from the Germanic Alps into the plain of the Po; to the west Louis XII, preferring his claims as Duke of Milan before his true policy as French King, wished to restore Cremona, Bergamo, and Brescia to the Milanese: as Archduke of Austria, Maximilian hoped to lay hands on Treviso and Friuli, which connected the inland with the sea: finally, Ferrara and Mantua

were jealous of their great neighbour, and each counted on getting some share of the spoil.

Things being thus disposed, Maximilian, whose high intelligence always discerned his own eventual interests, though his weakness hindered him from carrying out his schemes, proposed to Louis that the stipulations of the first Treaty of Blois should now be renewed and enforced. Louis, ignorant of politics, and blind to his true interests, was in the humour to listen. His right policy clearly would have been to secure himself at Milan, then in alliance with Venice and the Swiss to hold the Germans at bay, giving them no chance of establishing themselves in Italy; instead of this, he now attacked and weakened his best friend, the Queen of the Adriatic, and ere long was destined to offend and alienate his Swiss neighbours. Nor, perhaps, was Julius II less neglectful of his higher interests and duties: he sacrificed the independence of Italy for the sake of some small increase of Papal territory; and bought the Romagna towns by letting Germany, France, and Spain rend asunder the fair robe of Italy. Many Frenchmen saw clearly what a blunder was about to be committed: the great council remonstrated warmly against the Treaty; Louis de la Trémoille, in his Memoirs, tells us it was 'very pernicious to the French: for under shadow of it many great wrongs were inflicted on the King of France by means of this feigned accord or patched-up peace[1].' Still, in spite of all warnings, the treaty of Cambrai, a conspiracy of selfish princes against a free state, was signed by the Cardinal of Amboise and Margaret of Austria, a worthy representative of the old Burgundian dynasty[2], on the 10th of December, 1508.

[1] 'La paix fourrée.' Mémoires de Louis de la Trémoille, Collection Universelle, xiv. pp. 176, 177.

[2] Margaret of Austria, daughter of Maximilian and Mary of Burgundy, had all the strength which ought to have belonged to her brother Philip the Handsome. From infancy upwards she was the butt of the shafts of misfortune. She just missed the thrones of France, Spain, England: affianced as an infant to Charles VIII, cast off at the age of thirteen; married at eighteen to the Spanish Infanta, who died; then to Philibert the Handsome of Savoy, who died also, as did her much-loved brother Philip. Then she threw herself into political life, and undertook the care of her two nephews, Charles and Ferdinand. To successful statecraft she added good

Venice was to be driven from all her mainland possessions: these should then be divided between the Pope, the French King, the King of Aragon, and the Emperor: the Emperor should invest Louis XII with the Duchy of Milan, for himself, for Claude of France and her husband (if Louis had no male heirs), and, in case of the death of Claude, for her sister and her descendants. A money payment to Maximilian was of course included.

In order to raise funds again without burdening his people of France, Louis now condescended to commit a great political crime. He sold to Florence for a hundred thousand ducats permission to attack and destroy her rival Pisa—to crush that independence for which the Pisans had so gallantly struggled, which they had preserved throughout as friends of the French monarchy. Venice first, and now Pisa, the best allies of France in Italy, were thus lost to her, and the new system of European politics was consecrated by an act of shameless baseness.

Louis wasted no time: he gathered an army of twenty thousand foot and eight or nine thousand horse in the Duchy of Milan: it had been agreed that he should be first in the field: as the chroniclers say, in order that, if he succeeded, the others might come on and share the spoil, while, if he failed, they need not be entangled in his ruin.

A fine army was pushed forward by Louis, composed of French, Lombards, and Swiss. One great innovation marked it; the French infantry was now better organised, and led by good captains, who, at the King's order, gave up the command of their 'gens d'ordonnance,' their men-at-arms on horseback, to take charge of the foot soldiery. It was the beginning of a great change in modern warfare, rendered necessary by the Swiss mercenaries, who, fighting afoot with their long pikes, were daily proving themselves more and more formidable to cavalry. But at the time of the League of Cambrai the French infantry needed much reform. The 'Adventurers,' as they were called, are described in an Ordonnance of Francis I as 'vagabonds, lazy,

government, and an enlightened love for the arts and sciences. She was also a poet of no mean order.

abandoned, malign, flagitious, given up to every vice, robbers and murderers, violators, blasphemers, deniers of God[1].' They wore long shirts, which often they did not change for three months together. How wild they were can be seen from their horrible treatment of the fugitives in the grotto of Longara in this present war. The inhabitants had taken refuge in a great cave above their village; and as the entrance could not be forced, the Adventurers, not unlike their countrymen long after in Algeria, heaped wood, straw, and hay against the entrance of the grotto, and stifled the fugitives, who all perished except one youth, who at the inmost recess of the cavern had found a little crack, through which some fresh air entered[2]. Bayard, whose whole nature revolted against such brutality, caught two ring-leaders, 'one of whom had no ears, and the other had but one,' and hung them up before the entrance of the grotto; and so made such reparation as he could.

With these forces Louis XII presently crossed the Adda unmolested; and finding the Venetians, who had pushed forward to observe his movements, too strongly posted at Treviglio, nearly due north of Crema, he turned southwards, thereby flanking their position, and threatening their communications with Cremona. The two Venetian generals, princes of the great Orsini family, the Counts of Pitigliano and Alviano, were under special orders from the seignory of Venice not to risk a battle, but only to harass and hinder the forward movement of the French. Fearing therefore to be cut off, they hastily broke up from Treviglio, and marched, by a more direct road, parallel to the French. And so, when they had gone some short way, they found themselves (14th May, 1509) at the village of Agnadello, which they had succeeded in reaching before the French, but only so that their rear under Alviano touched the van of the foe. Alviano, tempted by the goodness of the position, a dry torrent-

[1] 'Avanturiers, gens vagabonds, oiseux, perdus, méchans, flagilleux, abandonnés à tous vices, larrons, meurtriers, violateurs de femmes et de filles, blasphemateurs et renieurs de Dieu.'

[2] Mémoires du Chevalier Bayard, in the Collection Universelle, xv. pp. 153, 154.

bed, and then vineyards with ditches round them, stood at bay, and sent back to Pitigliano for supports. That prudent old man, mindful of the Senate's orders, ventured nothing and lost all. The first French attack was repulsed: but Alviano was not strong enough to follow up his success, and could only wait: and as the day wore on his colleague moved further off, while the main force of the French was ever coming up. At last, the Venetians were driven back with terrible slaughter, their position forced, their leader, artillery and baggage taken. Had the main force of the Venetians supported the early success of Alviano, the fortunes of the war of the League of Cambrai might have been completely changed from the outset. As it was, all the mainland submitted. Brescia, Crema, Bergamo, opened their gates: in these the Ghibelline nobles were hostile to Venice, and gladly sided with the revolution against her. Peschiera was pillaged, and her two commandants hung by the express order of Louis XII, who showed himself as cruel in Italy as he was humane in France. Cremona fell, and in fifteen days the French part of the programme was carried out. The French army distinguished itself for cruelty and brutality, while it vied with the Swiss mercenaries in robbery and pillage. The King pursued the fugitives to within sight of Venice herself, and by way of bravado fired five or six shots into the city[1]. He soon afterwards returned to France. This was the moment of the highest reputation of Louis XII; France was completely under his hand, and, guided by Cardinal Amboise, seemed ready to give the law to Europe. Firmly seated in the Milanese, Louis overshadowed all Italy.

The other conspirators now saw that they too might advance with safety. Ferdinand of Aragon entered the Neapolitan and other southern ports; the Pope seized the Romagna cities; the Imperialists took Friuli and Istria, and, a little later, the great cities of Verona, Vicenza, and Padua. And thus each got all he had bargained for: Venice could but contract her power, till the storm had blown over, wait, negociate, and watch her opportunity from the safe shelter of her lagunes.

[1] So says Brantome, Collection Universelle, xvi. p. 46, note.

Nor was that opportunity slow to come. Even before the outburst of war, Julius II had sent warnings and proposals to her. Now the Venetians sent envoys hither and thither, except to the King of France, whose hatred for them they seemed to return with proud self-reliance. The Emperor would not listen; crafty Ferdinand temporised[1]; the Pope heard them with a friendly smile. He had won his Romagna towns, Imola, Faenza, Forli, and had therefore no wish to let the foreigner do more harm to Venice. With a good heart, the vigorous Republic came forth again, retook Padua, and kept it through a long and terrible siege, at last forcing the Emperor to withdraw and to send back his French allies. The Venetians recovered Vicenza, and threatened Verona; Maximilian, once more powerless, appealed to France to defend his conquests.

Thus things stood, when Julius II made peace with Venice, and began to look round him for allies against Louis XII. He negociated with the foreign kings; but that was only in order thereby to neutralise their influence, sowing discord among them; it was on the Swiss mercenaries that he really leant. Now that he had gained all he wanted on the northern frontier of the States of the Church, he thought that he might safely undertake the high duty of protecting Italy against the foreigner: he would accomplish what Cæsar Borgia had but dreamed of doing, he would chase the Barbarian from the sacred soil of culture.

We can plainly see that Italian patriotism had completely changed in character: there had formerly been an enthusiasm for a high standard of morality and a patriotic love of Italy, which had been rudely snapped when Savonarola perished. He and many illustrious predecessors had sought to regenerate their country by attacking her follies and frivolities; by holocausts of vanities, by appeals to penitence, by fervid sermons and proclamation of the Republic of God. Now however foreign policy and intrigue took the place of native patriotism and virtue; and Italians came to believe that not their own self-sacrifice and

[1] 'Lequel legèrement changeoit d'opinion, quand il cognoissoit son advantage.' Martin du Bellay, Collection Universelle, xvii. p. 69.

prowess, but their employment of Swiss mercenaries, was the first stage towards the regeneration of Italy. Savonarola himself had led the way, by calling in Charles VIII; then came Machiavelli, who had listened to Savonarola, and had often smiled his bitter smile at the enthusiastic theories of the prophet; and then Cæsar Borgia appears as Machiavelli's pattern prince. Thus Italy descended: she must turn her eyes from the lofty ideals of the Florentine friar to the balancing patriotism of the Florentine secretary; and then must needs content herself with the worldly statesmanship of a Julius II, perhaps the most completely secular prince who ever sat in S. Peter's chair; she must balance between the Barbarians, or buy their help: her culture, her art, her intelligence, seemed to her to be so many excuses for the absence of all those more rugged virtues, which go to build up a nation's independence: she would remain, split up into a number of small centres of enlightenment, the admiration of the world; but the price she would pay would be three centuries of national impotence, three centuries of servitude under the great monarchies around. And so her fate was sealed: enthusiasm gave place to calculation and policy; policy soon sank into intrigue.

The heaviest blow that befell France at this time, heavier even than the dissolution of the League of Cambrai, was the death of George of Amboise. Though he would never hold more than one piece of preferment, the Archbishopric of Rouen[1], he died exceedingly wealthy, having gathered much in both France and Italy. Yet he had always spent his money readily and splendidly; he was a great builder and patron of Art; Art owes to him a fresh development in France. He brought men from Lombardy, architects, painters, sculptors; they added richness and ornamentation to the French taste, while they did little for its ennoblement. The flavour of antiquity, the classical reminiscences, which mark the cinque-cento revival of Italy, married themselves to the more severe and pure French Gothic, and a

[1] Hence a poor contemporary joke, at the time of his struggle with Marshal Gié, who was of the House of *Rohan*,—that *Rouen* and *Rohan* were by no means one.

great expansion of artistic feeling in sculpture, in glass[1], in construction, may still be traced to the work of this period. Painting had, on the other hand, no worthy representatives: nor did the painters and masterpieces brought in from Italy seem to kindle any spark of genius in France.

Art might do without her patron: but the political future of France could not go right without the Cardinal's guiding hand. We approach a dark time in the history of this period.

Julius II was unwearied; he would see the end of the French in Italy ere he died. When he heard of the death of the Cardinal of Amboise, he 'thanked God that now he was Pope alone!' so much had the power of the great minister oppressed him. He at once set himself to secure the Swiss, and found a ready and capable agent in Matthew Schynner, Bishop of Sion in the Valais, who hated the French, and was very influential with the Helvetic Leagues. Schynner had offered his services to Louis XII; and that monarch, too thrifty in his dealings to suit the Swiss, had replied that he asked 'too much for one man'; whereat the offended bishop turned to the Pope; and the Swiss, feeling also that the French market was low, readily became the willing instruments of the Pontiff's great schemes, and proudly became the Fidei Defensores of the day, the 'Protectors of the Holy See.' Bishop Schynner was rewarded for this traffic with a cardinal's hat.

And now, with no one to guide him, Louis XII began to follow a difficult and dangerous line of policy: he called a National Council at Tours, and laid before it, as a case of conscience, the question whether he might make war on the Pope. The Council at once declared for the King, distinguishing, as well they might under Julius II, between the temporal and the spiritual in the Papacy, and declaring that any papal censure that might be launched would be null and void. An appeal was made, as was so often to be the case in this period, to a

[1] The workers in glass were so good that they were sent for to Rome to decorate the Vatican, under the supervision of Bramante and Raphael. The tomb of George of Amboise in Rouen Cathedral is perhaps the most beautiful piece of Renaissance work in France.

General Council. There was constant reference in the minds of the prelates to the Council of Basel, which had been so favourable to the Gallican liberties. And yet the call for a General Council was not in truth so much an echo of the past, as a voice of the future. It was the first of those appeals from the Papacy to the general mind of Christendom which marked the earlier part of the sixteenth century, and led up to the Reformation. France, however, who has ever subordinated her religious feelings to her political needs, appealed to a General Council for her political purposes only.

Meanwhile war went on in Italy. A broadly-planned attack on Milan, Genoa, and Ferrara, concerted by Julius II with the Venetians and Swiss, had come to nothing. This having failed, the warlike pontiff—one knows his grim face from Rafael's picture in the National Gallery, his hard determined mouth and beetling brows, and hands that grasp his chair—took the field in person. At Bologna he fell ill, and seemed like to die; Chaumont of Amboise was also marching up with the French at his heels to surround and take him there. By skilful treating with the French general Julius gained time, till a strong force of Venetians had entered Bologna. Then the Pope rose from his sick-bed, in the dead of winter, and marched out to besiege Mirandola: he planted his tent within gunshot of the town, and after the place had capitulated, as the gates had all been walled up, crossed the frozen moat, and was carried in a litter through the breach that had been made by his guns. Bayard soon after attacked him, and all but took him prisoner. A congress at Mantua followed: but the Pope sternly refused to make terms with the French: the war must go on.

Then Louis took a dangerous step. He convoked an ecclesiastical council at Pisa, and struck a medal to express his contempt and hatred for Julius II: on the front he declared himself King of Naples, on the reverse ran the legend 'Perdam Babilonis nomen[1].' The Pope had gone back to Rome, and

[1] C. S. Lieb wrote a book on this coin. For an account of it see Klotz, Historia Nummorum Contumeliosorum, pp. 135, sqq.

Bologna had opened her gates to the French; the coming Council, which was to depose Julius, was proclaimed through Northern Italy. Yet, though the moment seemed favourable, nothing but a real agreement of the European powers could give success to such a step. And how far men were from such an agreement Louis was soon to learn; for Julius, finding that the French did not invade the States of the Church, resumed negociations with such success that in October 1511 a 'Holy League' was formed between the Pope, Venice, Ferdinand of Aragon, and Henry VIII of England. Maximilian wavered and doubted; the Swiss were to be had—on payment.

At first Louis showed a bold front; in spite of this strange whirl of the wheel of politics from the League of Cambrai to the Holy League, he persevered, giving the command of Milan to his nephew, Gaston of Foix, Duke of Nemours, a man of twenty-three years, the most promising of his younger captains. He relieved Bologna, and then seized and pillaged Brescia; then pushed on to attack Ravenna; it is said that the booty of Brescia was so great that the French soldiers, having made their fortunes, deserted in crowds, and left the army much weakened.

With this diminished force Gaston found himself caught between the hostile walls of Ravenna, and a relieving force of Spaniards, separated from him only by a canal. The Spaniards, after their usual way of warfare, made an entrenched camp round their position. The French first tried to take the city by assault; but being driven back, determined to attack the Spanish camp. The canal between them was shallow: the French hastily waded through, and marched, in the face of a fierce fire of artillery, straight at their enemy's lines. The French guns, skilfully planted so as to support them, galled the Spanish soldiery, who were cooped up in narrow quarters: at last they could bear it no longer, and broke out from their entrenchments, against orders. This was fatal for them; after a furious struggle—'Since God made heaven and earth, no assault more cruel and hard has been seen than that of French and Spaniards,

on that day[1]'—the French prevailed, and took the camp: the day was won. Gaston, whose young blood was up, could not bear to see two stiff battalions of Spaniards break through their enemies' lines and move off in good order: with a handful of followers he fell on them to bar their way. In this mad assault he and his all lost their lives: and the death of the young Prince more than balanced the great victory of the day: for with Gaston, as Guicciardini says, perished all the vigour of the French army. When the soldiers gathered together rejoicing over their victory, with clarions and trumpets bravely sounding, they sought everywhere for their well-loved young captain to congratulate him. All at once a voice cried aloud 'Gaston is dead.' Then deep silence fell on the jubilant host, followed by the sound of strong men sobbing and weeping. When Louis XII was told it, he cried out,—for he loved his nephew warmly,—that he would rather have lost Italy than Gaston!

And indeed it was the turning-point of his fortunes in that land. Though Ravenna was taken, the French could no longer support themselves. Their communications with Milan were threatened by the Swiss: they left garrisons in the strong places and fell back. The Council of Pisa had also to take refuge at Milan. When the Swiss came down from their mountain-passes to restore the Sforza dynasty, the harassed council broke up from Milan, and fled to Lyons; where it lingered a while, falling speedily into contempt; anon it vanished into thin air.

The Pope retook Bologna, Parma, Piacenza; the Medici returned to Florence; Maximilian Sforza was re-established, while the Grisons Leagues received the Valteline as their reward: the English annoyed the coast without any decisive result: they had failed at S. Sebastian, had fought a sea-battle, and had been defeated off the Breton coast, where the English ship, the Regent, and the French La Cordelière, coming to close quarters were burnt, together with their crews, to the horror of all onlookers. Ferdinand seized Navarre, which henceforward became

[1] See the spirited account of the battle in the Mémoires du Chevalier Bayard, Collection Universelle, xv. pp. 287–314.

Spanish to the Pyrenees. Before winter, not one foot of Italian soil remained to the French. Julius II, the formidable centre of the Alliance, which had worked such ill to the French, died at this moment (1513): he had caused his own statue in bronze, representing him as a Cæsar in armour, to be set up in Bologna[1]; he had been a soldier and a patriot, though he was far from being a pattern Pope, and certainly no meek and peaceful servant of the Cross. The allies secured the election of a Medicean Pope, Leo X, a pontiff hostile to France, and certain not to reverse his predecessor's policy.

This is an age of incalculable changes: the weathercock of politics whirls round from side to side. Ferdinand negociated with every one and cheated all who could be cheated: Louis, finding himself menaced on every side, suddenly turned about and made advances to Venice, which he had so foolishly alienated just before; natural tendencies overbore all resentments on both sides, and a treaty between them guaranteed to Louis the possession of Milan, and gave him a strong force of Venetian soldiers. Meanwhile, Ferdinand had come to terms with Maximilian and with boyish Henry VIII, who was eager to break away from his father's traditions of non-intervention, and had framed a scheme for the overthrow of France. The French King, instead of staying at home to defend his frontiers, was eager to retake Milan, and to join hands with the Venetians: it was just like the opening of his reign over again. But the Swiss round Maximilian Sforza defended him without fear or treachery; and catching the French troops under La Trémoille in a wretched position not far from Novara, attacked and utterly defeated them in 1513. The French withdrew beyond the Alps; the Venetians were driven off with great loss by the Spaniards, who ravaged their mainland territories down to the water's edge. For the short remainder of his life Louis XII had no leisure again to try his fortunes in Italy: he was too busy elsewhere.

After defeating and slaying Sir William Howard, Préjean with

[1] They pulled it down and made a cannon of it when the Papal party was driven out of Bologna.

the French fleet attacked the English coasts, and was driven off with much loss; meanwhile Henry VIII crossed unmolested to the Continent, and landed at Calais: his ships menaced the shores of Brittany. Thence he marched southward with Maximilian in his train[1]; some said the King of the Romans was the real if not the nominal commander of the English army. They besieged Therouenne; a French army, under the Duke of Longueville, tried to victual and relieve the place; but being surprised by the English not far from Guinegate, the cavalry fled, and overthrew the infantry: Longueville, Bayard himself, and other captains of name, were taken prisoners as they tried to rally the panic-stricken army. The rout was complete; there had been no fighting, there was almost no slaughter: in derision the victors called it 'the Day of Spurs.' After this, Therouenne yielded: and the allies went on, against Henry's wish, to besiege Tournay, which town Maximilian coveted. A large part of the English force had been sent back, to meet the danger again menacing England from the North. For James IV of Scotland, a firm friend of Louis XII, according to the traditional policy of the two countries, now tried a diversion in favour of France: but he had scarcely crossed the border, when he was met by Lord Howard, and defeated and slain on Flodden Field (Sept. 9th, 1513).

Meanwhile the Eastern borders of France were in great peril: the formidable Swiss Leagues, flushed with their victory at Novara, welcomed into Franche-Comté by Margaret of Austria, and strengthened by a mixed force of Swabians and Austrians, attacked the Duchy of Burgundy and besieged Dijon. La Trémoille, who commanded there, had hardly any troops: he knew the Swiss well, began to treat with them, flattered them in their belief in their high destiny as the arbiters of Europe, offered them a great sum in crowns, and, in fine, persuaded them to sign a treaty, which professed to redress all that was unjust in Europe. La Trémoille promised that Louis should abandon his Council

[1] The Emperor became the King's soldier, and condescended to take pay; 100 gold crowns a day.

(it had already disappeared), should make peace with the Pope, should cede Milan to Maximilian Sforza, should pay the Swiss 400,000 crowns. On these conditions the invaders consented to make peace with Louis and to withdraw: the other powers of Europe might join the treaty if they would. All sides cried out against this sensible treaty, which was in fact nothing but a plain statement of the condition to which things were actually coming. The treaty was not ratified; still Louis thought it well to buy off the Swiss: he was also reconciled with the Papacy, and abandoned his pretensions to the Milanese in favour of his daughter Renée, whose mother, Anne of Brittany, had wished to marry her to one of the Archdukes, probably Ferdinand of Austria, grandson of aged Ferdinand of Aragon. Queen Anne did not live to carry out her plans; she died early in 1514, lamented by the King, by her Bretons, by the poor, and by her artist-friends; but not at all by France, or by any one who had the welfare of the kingdom at heart.

Her death cleared the way for many things. The King's eldest daughter, affianced eight years before to Francis of Angoulême, was now at once married to him, and the two were invested with the Duchy of Brittany, which was at last about to be actually united with the French Crown. Moreover, sincerely as Louis mourned his Breton spouse, he still, in spite of age and sore infirmity, hoped for an heir; and all the courts of Europe were before him to choose from. It seemed as if he was certain to marry either Margaret of Austria or Eleanora, sister of Charles and Ferdinand: the marriage-compact was even drawn up. But Henry VIII and Leo X were alarmed at the danger; all Europe would fall before so powerful a coalition as that of France and Austria. The Duke of Longueville, a prisoner in England since the Day of the Spurs, had much commended himself to the English courtiers, who delighted much in French fashions, and had become a close friend of Henry; he ventured to suggest that the lovely young princess Mary Tudor, the King's sister, would be a far better match for Louis than either of the others. Wolsey agreed, the Pope approved; Louis,

when sounded, liked the proposal. Another sudden whirl of the wheel of politics followed. Treaties were signed, and the marriage speedily arranged. Mary of England had already been affianced to Charles of Austria, so that it was a double blow to Ferdinand the Catholic. The Duke of Suffolk brought the fair maiden over to France; at Abbeville the marriage took place. It was a most unequal union, Louis XII being fifty-two years old, and she very young; he prematurely old, vexed with disease (some called it gout), repulsive to look on, with his 'moist lips and slouching gait,'—she in all her English freshness of youth and loveliness. To reconcile her to her fate, Henry promised that she should be allowed to choose her next husband for herself, as in the end she did. The marriage was unfortunate for the King: for years he had kept himself alive by careful diet, early hours, a simple life; now, to please his bright little queen, he stayed out late at dances, gave tournaments and shows, and broke through all the regularity of his dreary life. His physicians remonstrated in vain. Before he had been married more than three months, his health failed; he grew daily weaker; dysentery set in, and he had no strength to resist; so he died on New Year's Day, 1515. The young Queen, acting promptly on her brother's permission, which indeed she had earned, bestowed her hand on the Duke of Suffolk, 'a man of low origin,' who had commended himself to her young heart, when he escorted her over to marry the French King.

When the body of Louis was carried from the Tournelles at Paris to Notre Dame, the ringers went through the streets clinking their bells, and crying in a dolorous voice, 'the good King Loys, Father of his People, is dead[1]'; and a great sadness fell on all.

His reign had produced a rapid growth of material prosperity and the pleasures of cultured life in France; herewith came a marked advance in architecture, and the application to house decoration of Italian art, which found but little response from

[1] Fleuranges, Collection Universelle, xvi. p. 169.

French artists[1]; it produced an erudite, pedantic literature, and a love for classical antiquity which has clung to the French people, and has much influenced the writers and institutions of France, and has affected the great crises of her political life. Finally, this reign, in the main inglorious, saw the beginnings of that system of centralised justice and of bureaucratic official life, which made France the chosen land of lawyers and employés. Even as early as the middle of the sixteenth century this characteristic was sufficiently prominent to be noticed. Seyssel, writing of the state of France, says that 'there were, he thought, more officers of justice in France than in all the rest of Christendom put together'; and that these offices were the perquisite of what he calls the second estate, the 'fat and comfortable classes[2].' This last characteristic was apparently not due to the Italian tendencies and influences, as the others were. Nor were these influences at all on the wane; they rather were destined to increase and be more concentrated in the coming reign, when the Medicean House at last allies itself with the later Valois kings of the Angoulême branch, and introduces, not as a result of war, but by a peaceful invasion, a whole host of Italian habits and ideas into the very heart of France.

[1] Louis XII was rather notable for his taste for art than for his knowledge, if the following is a fair illustration. Glareanus, in his Dodecachordon (a treatise on music of that time) tells us that Louis XII was so well pleased with some Motetts which he and his choir-boys had sung that he ordered him to compose one, with a part in it for the king himself. Glareanus received the order with consternation, for the king had no ear and no knowledge of music, and a shrill squeaky voice: still he proved equal to the task, and produced a Motett in D which he prints with pride. His boys sang the simple melody, a strong bass voice droned up and down on D and A, and the king's part was the tenor D, without variation, continued as long as his majesty might choose to go on with it. Glareanus intimates that his master was well-pleased with the result.

[2] Seyssel, Grande Monarchie de France, c. xv. pp. 18, 19 (A. 15).

CHAPTER IV.

The First Period of the Reign of Francis I.

A.D. 1515–1519.

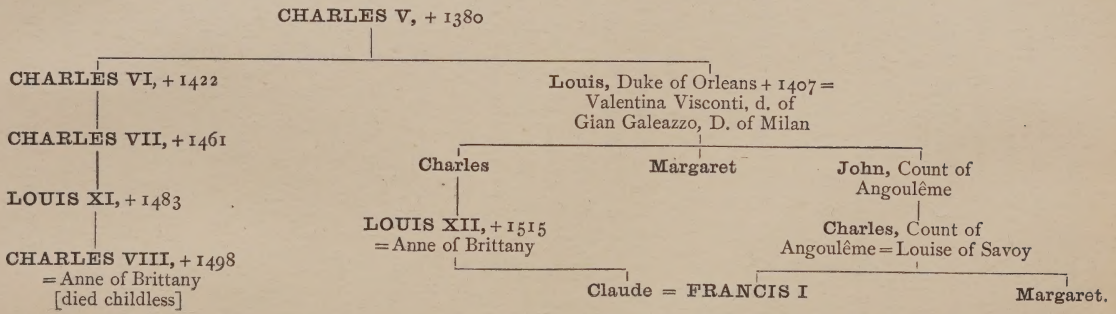
Francis, Count of Angoulême, was but twenty years old when he heard of the death of the kindly King. Eagerly had he watched for it; great had been his fears, when Louis XII took to himself a young wife, lest a son should be born to stand between him and the throne; but now all these perils were past, and the bright youth welcomed the tidings as a 'fair new-year's gift[1].' He was but a cousin of Louis XII, who had married the late King's daughter. The House of Valois had been slowly and steadily crumbling away; and now the nearest heir to the throne, Francis, was grandson of John, Count of Angoulême, who was the younger son of Louis, Duke of Orleans, brother of Charles VI, whom John the Fearless of Burgundy had caused to be foully slain in Paris in 1407[2]. High-spirited, chivalrous, and ambitious, Francis thirsted for the glories and joys of kingship; he had little care for its duties and responsibilities. His accession would have been a great epoch in the annals of the personal monarchy, had he been more cool and more persistent. His were all the tastes and ideas of a despot; fortunately he had little of the skill required to make a despotism formidable. He was wanting in that resolution and force of character which in moments of crisis show the hero; nor had he that permanence and persistency which in long years of endurance form the basis of true greatness. His reign is a protracted and severe struggle, carelessly adventured and

[1] Louis XII died on New Year's Day.

[2] See vol. i. p. 494.

TABLE IV.—THE RELATIONSHIPS OF FRANCIS I TO CHARLES VIII AND LOUIS XII.

[Repeated from the larger Table on p. 132.]



fitfully carried out. Two victories only brighten the long period: one at the opening, one at the end of the reign. Marignano heralded as with a blast of trumpets, the coming hero; Cerisoles gilds with a gleam of barren success the closing years of an unfortunate epoch. For the rest, the reign is not prosperous; nor is the monarch great.

He had a foolish and headstrong mother, Louise of Savoy; left a widow at eighteen, she gave herself up completely to her son, whom she adored. Her conduct after the battle of Pavia, when her stronger qualities had play, shows that she had plenty of power and energy. Unfortunately her strength only served to spoil her son. She has left us her journal. It is the curious record of a narrow intellect; it teems with trivialities, being a family chronicle which takes little heed of the outer world; for the writer's mind is centred on the one object of her pride and love. She notices a portent here and there; she expresses her hatred of finance officers; she registers the visits of her son, 'her Pacific Cæsar, who gained his first experience of mundane light at Cognac, 12 Sept. 1494.[1]'; or she records his one great triumph at Marignano, and styles him, 'my son, the glorious and triumphant Cæsar, subjugator of the Helvetians[2].' Such adulation was very sweet to the young monarch, whose brilliant bearing and belief in his own knightly prowess contrast strongly with his want of stedfastness, of honesty, of power of endurance. He was tall, strong, handsome, 'a fair prince, if ever there was one in this world[3].' But his was never a good face; and it became sensual and coarse, as we see him on the canvas of Paul Veronese, who drew him in his later days[4]. He had some of the good and many of the bad qualities of the chivalry he admired so much. He was fearless, impulsive, and

[1] Mémoires de Louise de Savoye, Collection Universelle, xvi. p. 410.
[2] Ibid. p. 421.
[3] Mémoires du Chevalier Bayard, Coll. Univ. xv. p. 363.
[4] Holbein drew him (the portrait is at Hampton Court): even there his narrow little eyes and large cheeks have an ignoble and selfish aspect. The 'Marriage of Cana in Galilee' in the Louvre was not finished till 1563, and therefore is not, properly speaking, contemporary.

had a high ideal of honour, which, however, did not come to much in the actual wear and tear of life. He celebrated his accession by a characteristic tournament, in which he himself held the lists; and regarded his great victory of Marignano as the triumph of chivalry over commonalty; the night he passed watching on the field he counted as his vigil before knighthood. He received the accolade after the battle from Bayard, the 'knight without fear and without reproach.'

He was selfish and self-indulgent. When the finances had become deeply embarrassed, he ordered that retrenchment should take place everywhere, except in the King's 'menus plaisirs,' his own 'lesser pleasures,' on which from the beginning he had wasted great sums. He was a man of artistic tastes without a moral groundwork. He might be, as von Ranke calls him, 'a King of culture'; yet his love of art was subordinate to his love of self; he cared for it rather for its beauty, than for its truth or nobleness.

Like Art herself, the King was plastic and soft. He could easily be moulded by a stronger will; and, standing as he did between his 'good and his evil genius,' his sister and his mother, he unfortunately listened to the voice of the stronger. That voice was never raised on the side of humane or good government. To his mother and her scandalous minister Du Prat, even more than to the King's weakness, is due whatever was amiss, and it was much, in this long reign. He came to the throne full of autocratic ideas, and eager to reverse his predecessor's policy. Louis, he thought, had yielded too much of his royalty, had been too kind to the nobles, to the Parliament, to the clergy, to the people. In the reign of Francis there was no weakness of that kind: no States General were convoked; the opposition of Parliament, of the University, of the Sorbonne, was overborne with determined obstinacy. The Concordat was a grievous blow aimed, one way or other, at the constitutional life of France.

It was not without good reason that on his death-bed Louis XII had cried out that 'that big boy would spoil all'; for he foresaw clearly from the disposition of Francis that the

true interests of the kingdom and people would receive but scant attention under the new reign. Accordingly, the reign of Francis I is a distinct reversal of all the home-policy of his predecessor. As Louis had been wisely sparing of gifts to the nobles, because he refused to plunder the peasants for their behoof, so we hear that 'never had there been king in France whom the noblesse so much rejoiced over as they delighted in Francis[1].' It is significant of the degradation of the proud feudal aristocracy, that they hailed the accession of this young king, not because they expected him to be weak, so as to give them a hope of recovering their lost territorial independence, but because they believed he would be lavish of gifts, for which they had thirsted in vain under Louis XII; just as they were ever well-pleased with the Italian expeditions, however ruinous to France, because they brought them rich spoil, fresh pleasures, new excitements.

Francis took as his device a salamander in the fire, with the ominous motto 'Nutrisco et exstinguo'; it seemed to forecast his future, moral and political. No prince had hotter passions, none was ever so much in the fire of warlike strife. Destiny marked him out as antagonist of men greater and more powerful than he. In his struggle against the preponderance of the Emperor Charles V he occupies a position, which might have answered, had he been a greater man, to that of William III in his heroic resistance to the overbearing schemes of Louis XIV.

Rarely has prince enjoyed so great a reputation with so little justice: refined in tastes, brilliant in the battle-field, he dazzles the eye, till we cannot discern the true man; his meanness, falseness, gross sensuality, abjectness in misfortune, are hidden behind his splendid outward bearing and his chivalrous deeds. It may be that as Heeren says, 'France saw in him an epitome of herself[2]'; if it be so, it was not the best side of French character

[1] Mémoires de Bayard, Coll. Univ. xv. p. 363.

[2] Heeren, Political System of Europe and the Colonies, p. 28 (ed. 1857). Von Ranke also (Französische Geschichte, i. p. 96) uses much the same language.

which he pourtrayed: her quick intelligence, her taste, her love of fighting, her immoral tendencies, her bright wit, her likings for absolute government, her power of subordinating her religious feelings, strong as they have sometimes been, to her political interests,—these qualities we may see displayed in Francis; but there is in him nothing of her thrift, her mental culture, her ambition to lead opinion, her skill in fashioning into the clearest and best form those ideas which her language is so well fitted to disseminate through the world.

Francis showed himself singularly incapable of dealing with the two great powers which arose in his day, Charles V and the Reformation. Against Charles, that modern statesman, he could set only intrigue and Italian cunning, varied with ill-planned disastrous wars: the Reformation he only smiled on so far as it seemed to be an onward movement in literary skill and culture; otherwise he showed no sign of understanding its importance, or of foreseeing the terrible heritage of civil war it was about to leave to France for the remainder of the century.

He quite mistook the political strength of France, and wasted it on foreign expeditions and schemes, on Naples, or Milan, or the candidature for the Empire. And yet to an intelligent statesman the true policy was writ large, and easy to read: each effort of France abroad brought failure and disgrace; each attempt of the foreigner to penetrate to the vital parts of the kingdom was easily and honourably repulsed. To make France 'a great central fortress in Europe,' as von Ranke says Louis XIV desired to render it, would have been the King's true function; had he consolidated her strength, fostered her industry of loom and field, fortified the critical places on her frontiers, he might have become the arbiter of Europe. But his temper and that of those round him made so cool and prudent a policy impossible. It was an age of young princes: to send a challenge to Charles, to have a wrestling bout with Henry, to be foremost in the intoxicating joys of court and camp, these were the characteristic aims and acts of the young monarch;

on these he fretted away his real strength, and left to the poor remainder of his royal race a legacy of impotence in general politics and of discord and shame at home.

At first Francis prudently interfered with none of his predecessor's officers; after his consecration at Rheims and solemn entry into Paris, 'he wished to put in order the estates and affairs of his realm[1].' His first and second appointments were very unfortunate for his government; for first, he named as his Chancellor Antoine du Prat, 'one of the most pernicious men that ever lived,' for twenty years the arbitrary instrument of royal lawlessness and injustice; and secondly, he gave the sword of Constable of France to Duke Charles of Bourbon, who afterwards deserted France and fought against her on the fatal field of Pavia.

He fell in gaily with the temptation which had beset his two predecessors, regarding it as a part of his inheritance to assert his claims to Milan and Naples. They had gathered nothing but shame; he would enter in and possess the land. Valentina Visconti, the wife of Louis Duke of Orleans, was his great-grandmother; from her descended to him as well as to his cousin Louis XII the disputed claim on Milan: that he had married Claude, his predecessor's daughter, added no real strength to this claim, though it gave to him and France the undisputed possession of Brittany.

Maximilian Sforza, eldest son of Lodovico 'il Moro,' had first become Duke of Milan in 1512, and had been established there firmly in 1513. Ill-prepared was he for the storm now about to break on him. Maximilian the Emperor-Elect and Ferdinand of Aragon were but nominal protectors; his only true strength lay in his Swiss mercenaries. Francis began at once to prepare for war; he made peace with Henry VIII of England; renewed old friendships with the Venetians; won over the important republic of Genoa, which Charles V would one day make the connecting link between Austria and the Spanish kingdom; negociated with Charles, the young Arch-

[1] Mémoires de Martin Du Bellay, Collect. Univ. xvii. p. 41.

duke, his future rival and bane, promising to give him in marriage his sister-in-law, Renée, second daughter of Louis XII, who later in life defended Calvin and Marot, and became the most illustrious of Huguenot ladies: Francis also promised Charles that he would help him, when the day came, to secure the vast heritage of his two grandfathers, Maximilian and Ferdinand. It was, in a somewhat vague form, the first of those many general treaties of Partition, which have marked the political history of Europe from that day to the present time.

Francis now gathered together in Dauphiny an army[1] of six thousand Gascon foot soldiers, four thousand French 'adventurers[2],' and from eight to nine thousand 'landsknechts,' infantry from the level lands of Germany, as distinguished from Swiss mercenaries, who, in the language of the time, were styled 'the Germans of the mountains[3]'; with them rode a body of cavalry, nobles and gentlemen of France, perhaps two thousand five hundred of them[4]. At their head was the spirited young King, with his Scottish archers, twenty-five in number, gaily dressed, and closely surrounding his person; then followed a hundred men-at-arms, who kept the watch; then four hundred French archers in a handsome uniform; then one hundred Swiss; then, lastly, the guards of the gate; all these formed the royal body-guard.

Against such formidable levies the Holy League was hastily renewed: the Spaniards checked the westward movement of the Venetians, taking Brescia, Verona, and Vicenza; Leo X set his forces in motion; the Swiss occupied the mountain-passes towards Dauphiny, from Mont Cenis to Mont Genèvre; Genoa seemed to be the only undefended gateway through which

[1] Fleuranges, Collection Universelle, xvi. p. 177, says that there were 26,000 landsknechts, 10,000 adventurers, 10,000 Gascons, 2500 gens-d'armes, 1500 light cavalry. He doubtless much overrates the army.

[2] See above, pp. 155, 156.

[3] The true form of the word is landsknecht, not lanzknecht, as some have thought.

[4] Reckoning that a 'lance fournie' at this time had with him five horsemen, this would make a force of cavalry, heavy and light, of $2500 \times 6 = 15{,}000$, which is probably an extreme statement.

Francis could enter into Italy. It was in vain; for they all failed to foresee the energy and enthusiasm of their young antagonist. With help and guiding of friendly mountaineers, the whole army with horse and guns overcame unheard-of obstacles, and crossed the Cottian Alps, south of Mont Genèvre, and so came out on the Italian plains. Here, as afterwards, Peter of Navarre did excellent service by directing all the engineering works needful for the passage. He had been taken prisoner by the French at the battle of Ravenna; and being left unransomed by Ferdinand the Catholic, had attached himself to the fortunes of France, becoming one of their ablest and most faithful officers: his great engineering gifts were of the highest value to them both now and at the siege of the Castle of Milan[1]. At this time he also had organised the artillery, which, if we may trust the account of 'the young Adventurer[2],' included a kind of mitrailleuse, a gun two feet long, which could discharge fifty bullets at once.

Bayard, who, here as ever, was foremost of all, though he held no high command, surprised Prosper Colonna, the general of the League, at his dinner in Villafranca, and made him prisoner. The Swiss, seeing themselves outflanked, after throwing a force into Novara, which nevertheless soon had to capitulate to Francis, fell back on Milan, where lay 'that good prophet, the Cardinal of Sion, who all his lifetime had been mortal foe to the French, as he showed clearly enough at this time[3].' Yet even his eloquence could not hinder division among the Swiss: Ferdinand was a slack paymaster, while Francis came with money in hand: he halted at Marignano, a little town some ten miles south-east of Milan, on the direct road to Rome[4], to see how his negociations fared. There he

[1] He was eventually taken by the Spaniards, and strangled in 1528.

[2] Fleuranges (Collection Universelle, xvi. p. 178): 'Une façon d'artillerie, que le jeune Adventureux avoit appris, et n'estoit pas plus longue de deux pieds, et tiroit cinquante boulets à ung coulp, et servit fort bien.' Cp. also Guicciardini's reflexions on the improvement in French artillery under Charles VIII, A. 1494, lib. i. f. 25 (ed. 1580).

[3] Mémoires du Chevalier Bayard, Collection Universelle, xv. p. 376.

[4] Fleuranges, Collect. Univ. xvi. p. 189.

could join hands with the Venetians, and watch the movements of his antagonists at Milan, at Pavia, and at Rome. Lautrec, who had been sent forward with five hundred men-at-arms to guard the treasure, fifty thousand crowns, was on the very point of paying over to the Swiss the sum they demanded as the price for which they should abandon the League and withdraw to their mountains, when news came that the whole face of affairs was changed. A fresh army of Swiss had come down to Milan, eager for war and pay; and the Cardinal had lost no time: he mounted on a chair in the courtyard of Milan castle 'in the midst of them, like a fox preaching to the hens[1],' and eloquently urged them to fight. They must continue to be the arbiters of the world; they must still make kings and popes tremble before them; and, most winning theme of all, so doing they would carry off a prize of untold wealth. Then the 'Bull of Uri' and the 'Cow of Unterwalden,' the two great mountain-horns of the Swiss, sounded long and loud: and the whole host, carried away by the impulse, rushed out of Milan gates; the Cardinal went with them, to fan their warlike temper and share the triumph. Yet, in spite of his influence, the men of the 'High Cantons,' Zurich, Uri, Bern, Unterwalden, to the number of about fourteen thousand[2], halted outside the gates, and, turning their faces homewards, marched away. The rest, undeterred, rushed onwards towards Marignano.

The French, taken almost at unawares, had little time to prepare for battle. The Swiss attack was sharp and determined: and the King's artillery in very great peril. The French defence was stubborn till nightfall, when the darkness saved them. They had been driven back to their park of artillery in the centre: it was thought that they were quite broken; and a messenger was sent to Rome to Leo X, with tidings of a Swiss victory, to his great joy. The King, within a stone's cast of his enemies, sat most of the night on horseback, and

[1] Fleuranges, Collect. Univ. xvi. p. 190.
[2] So says Fleuranges, ibid. p. 192.

only[1] snatched some uneasy sleep on a gun-carriage. At first he was almost alone, and at the mercy of his foes, had they but known it. His men lit a fire, but he bade them put it out, lest it should be a beacon to the Swiss. He had with him no infantry; and only some five-and-twenty men-at-arms, who served him manfully: but as night wore on others gathered to him; and when day broke he was in a condition to defend himself again[2]. Skirmishing had gone on all night; and as soon as it was light, the Swiss pressed on to complete their victory. The French centre, however, stood firm: the King, seconded by his men-at-arms, fought with vehement courage: 'without the men-at-arms, who bore the brunt, all might have been lost[3].' An attack on the King's flanks met with no better success: the heat of the morning, the long march of the day before, the want of food, all told more on the attack than on the defence: and at last, at ten o'clock, Alviano, the Venetian commander, who had marched with all haste to succour Francis, came up; and then the Swiss knew that they were beaten.

There was no pursuit, the French being too weary; the broken army, having lost its best captains and its veteran warriors, retreated sullenly to Milan, and with them the crest-fallen Cardinal: thence, as things looked ill, and mutiny broke out in the Swiss camp, he fled for refuge to Maximilian in Germany.

Thus opened the new era of French history with a great and splendid victory: Leo X was aghast when the Venetian ambassador brought him tidings, which sounded doubly harsh after the hopes of the day before: Charles, the young accomplice of Francis, sent congratulations; Henry of England was full of jealousy at the brilliant success of his rival in the eyes of Europe. The Swiss 'returned home,' says Erasmus,

[1] Fleuranges says (Coll. Univ. xvi. p. 199): 'Le mist sur une charette d'artillerie, pour soy ung peu reposer.' And Du Bellay, Col. Univ. xvii. 58, says, 'Coucha le Roy . . . sur l'affust d'un canon.'

[2] Fleuranges, ibid. pp. 198, 199.

[3] Du Bellay, Coll. Univ. xvii. p. 58.

'ragged, gaunt, disfigured, wounded, with flags torn, and funeral dirges for festal songs[1].' The 'hares in armour,' as they had called the French[2], had beaten and crushed them: their domination over the fortunes of Europe was at an end. It had been a 'battle of giants'—but the long pikes of the gaunt mountaineers had been pushed back by the gay gallantry of the French gentlemen. Bayard had entered into the very spirit of the struggle when he rushed at them, shouting, 'Swiss, traitors, cursed villains, get you back to eat cheese in your mountains, if you can[3].' It was, as has been said[4], the last great battle of the old romantic world, the last triumph of feudal chivalry over burgher infantry as represented by the Swiss. Here as elsewhere, Francis is the knight-errant, not the statesman; we see it when, before the battle, some counselling retreat, he exclaimed 'he would fight alone rather than give way before such a peasantry[5]:' and again in his craving the accolade from the sword of Bayard, and in his curiously inaccurate letter to his mother[6], in which he talks of the gentlemen who 'broke lance so well, sparing themselves as little as hot and angry wild boars.' This brilliant outset lured him on to many a fall.

Pavia yielded on the news; Milan also: the Swiss were allowed to go home in peace; Maximilian Sforza surrendered: he was to be kept in honourable guard in France, with a good pension for his sustenance: he was sent to Paris, where he died unobserved and forgotten in 1530. His father, the greater Lodovico, had had a parallel career of success at Milan and of captivity in France, under Louis XII.

[1] Erasmus to Ammonius, 2 Oct. 1515. Brewer, State Papers, 7 Henry VIII, ii. part 1, p. 265.

[2] Francis' letter to his mother: 'Ne dira-t-on plus que les Gendarmes sont lièvres armés.'

[3] Gestes de Bayard, iii. 1, in Cimber et Danjou, Archives curieuses, I. ii. p. 158: 'Suisses, traistres et villains maulditz, retournez manger du fromaige en vos montagnes si povez.'

[4] Professor Brewer, State Papers, Henry VIII, II. i. p. xlv.

[5] Vieilleville, i. p. 295; quoted by La Vallée, ii. p. 296.

[6] Given by Laval, Desseins et Professions Nobles (1613), and in Collect. Univ. xvii. p. 442.

Francis soon showed, at home and abroad, how little he understood or cared for the true interests of his country. In this, as in all other things, he was the opposite of his predecessor, who had subordinated everything to the well-being of France. After Marignano, in full flush of his triumph, Francis had an interview at Bologna with Pope Leo X: the wary pontiff quickly caught the inexperienced conqueror in his toils. The aim of Francis was to secure his position in Italy by an alliance with the Pope and the Swiss. With the latter he concluded a Perpetual Peace (Nov. 1515) which, strange to say, proved worthy of the name; for it lasted as long as the French monarchy. With the Pope also things went smoothly. Leo gave up his claims to Parma and Piacenza, purposing of course to resume them at the first moment possible; the young King promised in return to secure the Medici as Lords of Florence and Urbino. Then, with all show of respect and affection, the King took leave of the Pontiff: Du Prat, the Chancellor, being left behind to draw up a treaty, by which the two princes should cement their friendship over the prostrate body of the Gallican Church.

Great was the amazement in France, when it was known that the 'Pragmatic Sanction' of Bourges (A.D. 1438)[1] had been abolished to make room for a 'Concordat,' whereby the King presented to the Pope the wealth of the Church, and the Pope handed over to the King its independence. The Pragmatic Sanction had declared that decennial Councils of the whole Church ought to be holden; had raised the authority of such Councils above the Papacy; had abolished annates, reserves, expectations, rich sources of Papal income; and had carefully secured to the Church of France the right of free election to all high ecclesiastical preferments. Pope after Pope had aimed at the abolition of this charter of the Gallican liberties. Pius II got from Louis XI in 1461 a promise to revoke it; the King however did not keep his word: Paul II in 1467 received another assurance from the wily monarch; and this too proved

[1] See vol. i. p. 554.

equally ineffectual: Julius II at the Lateran Council denounced all who supported it: it was reserved for Leo and Francis to sweep it away. The Concordat substituted in its place had two main conditions: the first in the King's favour; he got all appointments to benefices, excepting such bishoprics and abbeys as enjoyed any special privilege from the Papacy. The second condition was for the Pope; the old claim that Councils should be above the Papacy was dropped; the Pope was to have once more the forbidden annates. Thus Leo grasped for himself a temporal advantage, and sold for it a spiritual power to Francis. Italy was sacrificed to the Pope, and France to the King.

This Concordat was a great act of royal autocracy, both in itself and in the way in which it was concluded and forced on France. It declared that there should no longer be an independent clerical aristocracy; and when the Parliament of Paris refused to register it, they were told that the King would suffer 'no Venetian Oligarchy'; and were forced to receive it: when the University protested with vehemence, he threw her best men into prison, and showed his contempt for learning as well as for law. Though these august bodies were obliged to yield in this case,—for they had no constitutional fighting-ground,—they still resisted wherever they could, until at last, in 1527, the King, of his own power, took from the Parliament all cognizance of ecclesiastical affairs, and handed them over to his great Council. The resistance, renewed from time to time, was broken against the rock of royal autocracy: the Concordat, like the 'Perpetual Peace,' lasted as long as the monarchy endured. The wealth and high dignities of the Gallican Church were henceforth closely bound up with the royal power: in all, above six hundred great benefices were handed over to the King, to be given according to his will. To this revolution may be attributed the rise of that remarkable series of political Churchmen who henceforward play so striking a part in French history; to it France in some degree owes that dissoluteness of manners which marked her upper clergy, their subservience to the royal will, their bland

acceptance of royal vices, their inability, when the storm at last fell on them, to defend themselves against the attacks of the Revolution.

One might have thought that when this 'new Cæsar,' this 'subjugator of Helvetians,' reached France again, his career would have answered to this brilliant opening. He came home triumphant; the French people, easily dazzled, welcomed him with joy; his nobles were satisfied with glory, and liked their pleasure-loving, open-handed lord; the clergy knew nothing of the coming blow, and were loyal and content. But Francis had no heart for the stern business of good government, or painstaking justice, or prudent economy: money to spend on war and amusements seemed to him the chief affair. So he left the charge of government to his mother, and she leant on her unprincipled friend Du Prat. He, by harshness, by contempt of law, by violation of justice, by aggravated taxation, became the true despot of France, a Richelieu without his breadth of vision and singleness of aim. To him is due the expansion to fatal dimensions of that error of Louis XII, the magistracy by purchase. Louis had done it to relieve the poverty of his poor people; Francis did it tenfold, to minister to his own disgraceful pleasures. The new officers brought justice into contempt, and swelled the long list of privileged persons who bore no share in the state's burdens. It has been remarked on the other hand, that in the end these bought offices became a secure form of property, which could be left by will or sold, and thus tended to give a solidity and independence to the judicial class, which has added much to the dignity and power of the law in France[1].

So it fell out that the years after Marignano, instead of carrying on the growing prosperity of the country, were years of decadence. The popular hatred fastened on Louise of Savoy and Du Prat; but the King was quite as much to blame: blunder after blunder was committed; and while the power of Charles steadily rose throughout this time, that of his rival as

[1] La Vallée, Hist. des Français, p. 299.

steadily fell. Things went ever wrong: the candidature for the Empire in 1519 was a mortifying failure; the treatment of Charles of Bourbon, and indeed of the whole Bourbon family, neither generous enough nor severe enough, was very damaging; the interview of the Field of the Cloth of Gold was a solemn farce: the Italian policy was weak, the Italian campaigns ruinous. It is an unfortunate decade, closing with the crowning mishap of Pavia.

In 1516 the King of Spain, Ferdinand the Catholic, died, leaving the boy Charles of Austria, now in his sixteenth year, to succeed to all his vast and scattered dominions, and almost illimitable claims, fettered only by the nominal partnership of his insane mother. At first the French monarch was friendly, and stood by the understanding he had come to with Charles before Marignano: the Treaty of Noyon, which aimed at settling all differences between Francis and Charles as to Naples and Navarre, and the Treaty of Brussels between Maximilian, France, and Venice, helped to stave off for a time the inevitable rivalry and warfare, though they made it all the more certain to follow in the end. The policy of Chièvres[1], tutor and mentor of the young Spanish King, was eminently pacific: he wisely aimed at the most important matter first; the King must secure his own throne before he thought about his neighbours: wherefore so long as Chièvres lived, Charles made no war. Francis, too, in all probability despised—and it was not an uncommon feeling at the time—the weak ugly boy, who seemed so quiet and inoffensive, and who showed but little sign of the vigour and sagacity of his later days. Charles was one of those men who ripen late, unlike his superficial and showy antagonist, who was at his brightest on the day of Marignano, and seemed to learn a little duplicity but no wisdom from the strife and mishaps of his later life. Francis was unconsciously the champion of

[1] William of Croy, Lord of Chièvres (a Hainault village), was one of that great family which had been so important under Philip the Good of Burgundy; he died of poison in 1521, and then war soon followed.

a great cause, of the freedom and independence of Europe, threatened by the overbearing power of Spain and Germany combined: but no such great thought ennobled his own mind or lifted his aims out of pettiness; some trivial cause, some momentary passion, seemed ever the power which alone could set him in motion.

The beginning of the great struggle drew near; the old Emperor-Elect, Maximilian, was failing, and the two young princes began to deal with the Electors. At the Diet of Augsburg in 1518, Maximilian would gladly have persuaded them to name his grandson Charles King of the Romans; but though the majority seemed willing, the opponents stayed action by appealing to the technical constitution of the Empire, and by declaring that under an Emperor-Elect (Maximilian had never been crowned, and never styled himself 'Emperor,' but only 'Emperor-Elect') there could be no King of the Romans.

Meanwhile changes were impending from other sides. The Turkish power seemed daily to grow more threatening on the Mediterranean, though its attacks on the vitals of Christendom by the valley of the Danube had not yet begun. The Moslems were aiming at domination in Persia and Egypt, and on the Levant shores; the old commercial routes were blocked by them. The fear of the Turkish cruisers had much impaired the trade of Venice with the East, the old connexions seemed to be snapping, and the new route to India and China by the Cape of Good Hope was being forced into favour.

There had also been some signs of distrust of England: Francis, in 1518, visited his harbours along the open sea, especially that of Havre, which was newly constructed at his command; and the Scottish rivals of the English crown hoped that a French navy would be created to rule the narrow seas. 'For God's sake and your honour's,' wrote Andrew Bishop of Murray to him, 'so act that you may become master of the sea.' It looked as if the ambition of Francis was tempted to begin that rivalry by sea which in later ages was the passionate desire and the greatest disappointment of the French people.

It came, however, to nothing; for Francis was inconsequent, and these movements only led to fresh dealings with England.

There Wolsey at this time had reached the zenith of his power. The Treaty of London (Oct. 1518) between France and England, by which France bought back Tournay, and the little Dauphin Francis was affianced to Mary the baby Princess of England, was his work. The influence it was thought England might exert at the next Imperial election, and the unbounded confidence Henry VIII placed in his Minister, led superficial lookers-on to believe that the great Cardinal was the arbiter of Europe, and that England was the centre of that new 'Balance of Power' which was already deemed to be essential to the welfare of the world.

CHAPTER V.

The Rivalry between France and Austria.

A.D. 1519–1529.

First Period.

Henceforth, for the rest of French history, we come face to face with the great rivalry between the Gallic and Germanic races, as represented by the Houses of France and Austria. With lulls and temporary changes (as when the House of Austria drew closer to France, abandoning its traditional policy, in the reign of Louis XV), this rivalry has continued from the election of Charles as Emperor down to our own days. It continues still in grim reality, though the champion of the Germanic name is not the same; and it may yet work woe and desolation in Europe. In 1519 Maximilian, most splendid of dreamers and weakest in action, ceased to vex, amuse, and harass Europe with his great enterprises and petty outcries for money. This strange and stately compound of great and little qualities now gave up the long struggle of his Imperial life, and passed away almost unregretted. The Empire, over which, while he yet lived, there had already been much indecent chaffering, was now openly in the market for the highest bidder. 'I will have it,' cried Francis, 'even though it cost me three million of crowns; and I swear that three years after my election I will be in Constantinople, or in my grave.' Henry VIII had also dreams of ambition; or perhaps thought it well to be on the spot so as to be able to throw weight into this or that scale. But Cuthbert Tunstal, whom he had sent into Germany in 1517, had honestly told him that it was a

delusion[1]; and the King in the end did not become a serious competitor for the throne.

Nor, had he been wise, would Francis have entered the lists in his own person. Had he thrown in his weight with one of the secondary powers, with Louis the boy-king of Hungary, or Frederick the Wise, he would probably have secured his election: this would have given him a firm footing in Germany, with no small reputation for disinterestedness, and, above all, it would have kept out his formidable rival. But Francis was dazzled by the brilliant prospect of being the lay head of Christendom, the defender of the Faith against the Moslem, the founder of a grand universal monarchy. It may also be said in fairness that the Electors were not inclined to choose a weak prince, partly through fear of the Turk, against whom they desired a strong bulwark, and partly from a growing feeling that Germany must have a powerful head, to carry on its consolidation. So it ended in a trial of strength between Charles and Francis.

To weigh these princes against each other might seem to be the true way of judging between them; but the Electors at first seemed likely to be swayed only by the meanest motives, by promises and bribes. Charles was young, being now nineteen, untried, silent; he showed no sign of greatness; he was an absolute foreigner in Germany, and could not speak any High Dutch, but only Flemish; he seemed, as a contemporary said, to be 'a poor lad; one knows not if he will ever be seen in Germany.' Again, he was too much occupied with his many domains; he showed no military ardour. What could he do against the Turk? Lastly, he was technically excluded by being King of Naples. On the other hand, Francis was at the very height of warlike reputation. He who had crushed the Swiss, those hitherto invincible warriors, would alone be able to beat back the Turk. Moreover he had enjoyed the support of England and of the Pope. He had close connexions with several German princes, such as the Dukes of Gelderland and

[1] Maximilian had offered to sell him the Purple for a round sum of money!

Würtemberg. And, lastly, his was a well-filled purse. Those who were of the party of progress, who cared for the new opinions or for the literary and artistic culture of the Renaissance, were tempted to be favourable to Francis; while Charles in temper and education[1] was probably thought to be inclined towards the older scholastic teaching, and to be likely to side with the monks and the opponents of the new learning.

So at first Francis seemed to carry all before him. The Elector of Trèves was his good friend; so, too, was the 'Palsgrave,' the Elector Palatine; Hermann Archbishop of Cologne was apparently on his side; the Pope brought over the Elector Archbishop of Mainz with a promise of the dignity of Apostolic Legate for Germany; nor were bribes wanting. Albert of Mainz seemed likely to secure his brother the Elector of Brandenburg, the two usually pulling together. Armed forces were gathering up, long negociations, warfare, bribery, intrigues, went busily on, in a huge entanglement of manifold hopes, doubts, uncertainties. The decision lay chiefly with Frederick of Saxony, who kept himself clear, and was regarded in Germany as the one true man in all the Electoral College. German feeling grew up against foreign dictation; and when it was known that the Pope had definitely interposed to bar the election of Charles, alleging that Papal Act which excluded the King of Naples from the Imperial throne, the Germans felt that this was a blow aimed at their own freedom of choice. From that moment the chances of the foreigner[2] faded, till, when the Electors met, it was seen at once that he could not be chosen. At first they thought of Joachim of Brandenburg; then they offered the crown to Frederick of Saxony, who not only refused it, but feeling that a decision must be come to, declared for Charles of Spain. Then Charles was elected King of the

[1] His tutor was that most virtuous of scholastic monks, the ex-professor of Louvain, afterwards raised by Charles to the Papal tiara as Adrian VI.

[2] A foreigner indeed, if ever there was one; but in theory Francis entered the lists as a German Prince, as he was Lord of the old kingdom of Arles, which was under the Empire. Arles had passed with its heiress to Charles of Anjou in 1251; thenceforth it went with Provence; and with Provence, on the death of Charles of Maine, its Count, in 1481, fell in to Louis XI.

Romans without a single dissentient voice[1]. From henceforth he is known to history as Charles the Fifth[2] (5th July, 1519).

Had Francis I understood his own interests or the interests of France, he would have rejoiced at this defeat; and would have regarded it as a warning to him against wasting his strength on foreign ambitions, and as an encouragement to him in trying to strengthen and develop the great resources of France. With her grand central position, her intelligent and high-spirited people, France under wise and cautious government might well have become the bulwark of the liberties of Europe, the counterpoise to Spain. But Francis thought only of external triumphs, in which he exhausted in vain the strength which, well directed, might have secured the equilibrium. For a time, however, Charles could not attend to other matters, for the ground seemed to be giving way under his feet. Spain, angry at his election to the Empire, was in full revolt; and the 'new opinions' which had been openly preached in Germany for the last three or four years had so spread that all men's minds were in a ferment.

Francis spent this precious time in the vain and lavish splendours of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, a camp in a plain between Guines, which was in the hands of England, and Ardres, which was French. Here, by way of a demonstration against his fortunate rival Charles, he entertained Henry VIII with all magnificence, and at a ruinous cost. The two Kings showed amazing confidence in each other. Francis, with but two gentlemen and a page, rode early one morning into Guines, and finding the English King a-bed, waited on him as he dressed; while Henry, returning the friendly visit, saw some wrestling, and, fired with a boyish and English love of play, challenged his brother King to try a fall; Francis, though his limbs were slender in comparison with those of stout-built Henry, was broad of shoulder, and very active. He stood up with the English King, and threw him easily. Throughout the conference, though there was so great a show of friendship,

[1] Dumont, p. 296.

[2] Hitherto only Charles I of Spain.

the whole thing was mere acting: no result followed from it. On the contrary, Henry, just before setting out for Calais, had had an interview at Canterbury with Charles V, who was now close friends with Wolsey. He was fascinated by the ugly young prince, his kinsman, or, perhaps, was seriously desirous of holding the balance between the rivals. His obvious thought was expressed in that motto, 'He whom I favour wins,' which was set up in his tent at Guines.

While Henry thus balanced between the rivals, there was another potentate who also was hesitating and calculating chances. Leo X ardently hoped that Charles and Francis would come to blows, for between them he thought to win Parma, Piacenza, and Ferrara for the States of the Church. After much wavering he turned his back on the weaker of the rivals, though Francis had been his old friend since the days of the Concordat, and attached himself to Charles, partly because he thought him the more likely to help him to these territories, and partly because the religious troubles of Germany were growing serious even in his worldly eyes, and he hoped that the Emperor would check them. And in fact the Decree of the Diet of Worms which condemned Luther was issued directly after the Pope had intimated that he was prepared to ally himself with Charles. The cause of the great Reformer, the cause of all the literary world at the time, of many convents, especially of those of the Augustinian rule, of the lawyers, who resisted the Papal exactions and claims, of many among the clergy, even of some bishops, of the leaders of the knighthood, of some even among the princes, and of a compact mass of burghers, and surging multitude of peasantry, was debated and considered before 'a Prince,' as von Ranke says[1], 'who understood neither our speech nor our thoughts.' No wonder if his judgment as to the new opinions depended on matters quite external, on the prospects of war, and on the worth of a Papal alliance.

And war was not far off. While Francis I had claims on Navarre, on Milan, and on Naples, in any one of which he might

[1] Deutsche Geschichte, i. p. 325.

soon come into collision with the young Emperor, Charles, on the other hand, as Duke of Burgundy, laid claim to that Duchy, and to the district on the Somme which had cost such wars and troubles in the days of Charles the Bold: he also had a word to say as to the kingdom of Arles and Dauphiny. The light-hearted Francis struck the first blow. Unprepared as he was, with his treasury exhausted by useless festivals and prodigal pleasures, his towns ill-equipped for defence, his soldiers scanty, still, thanks to the unrivalled central position of France and her great wealth, he was able to set considerable armies afoot: he burned to avenge himself on his rival. In April 1521 he ordered his army of the North under Charles the last Duke of Alençon to cross the frontier, and that of Gascony under Bonnivet to enter Navarre. Lautrec was ordered to defend Milan against the Spaniards and Imperialists, supported by Rome. The Spaniards speedily drove the incapable Bonnivet out of the Pyrenees. In the north, Robert de la Marck, Duke of Bouillon, head of the family of the old Boar of the Ardennes, angry at the Emperor's treatment of him, threw himself into the arms of France, sent defiance to Charles, and attacked Luxemburg. Here, had Francis been strong and resolute, was a great opening for him. The Bouillon fortresses ran well up towards the heart of the Netherlands; from them Francis might have threatened Brussels. But little was done. When Charles heard that Alençon had crossed the frontier he cried, 'Thank God that I have not struck the first blow, and that the King of France wishes to make me greater than I am! ... either I shall become a poor Emperor or he a poor King[1].'

The Count of Nassau, who was in command for Charles on the border-lands to the North, speedily drove back the French, and laid siege to Mezières, which was saved by Bayard and Montmorency, who by their gallantry gave the French army time to come up. When Nassau heard of their approach he raised the siege, sent his heavy artillery for safety to Namur, and marched towards Guise. The King from the sources of

[1] Lettere di Galeazzo, i. p. 93; quoted by La Vallée, ii. 316.

the Somme arranged the order of his army, giving the van to the Duke of Alençon, to the great anger of Bourbon, who as Constable of France claimed the place of honour, and as a successful soldier deserved it. The King kept him near his own person. Hard by Valenciennes the Emperor and the King drew near to one another: the Imperialists failed to hinder the French from crossing the Scheldt at Neufville. Louis de la Trémoille and Chabannes both urged the King to press the retreating Imperialists; Francis hesitated, and they escaped. Du Bellay declares that had the advice been followed the Emperor that day would have lost 'honour and fortune[1].' Charles fell back to Valenciennes, where he was in such despair that he fled that night with a hundred horse to Flanders, leaving his army to its fate: 'that day God had given us our foes into our hands; but we would not accept the gift, and this afterwards cost us dear[2].'

The French took Bouchain and Hesdin; after which, English envoys coming up to treat for peace between the Princes, the advance was stayed: it was agreed that the Emperor should withdraw from the siege of Tournay, and from the Milanese territory; the French should also withdraw: the English King was named umpire. And now news came that Bonnivet had taken Fontarabia; war began again, though Francis withdrew to Amiens, and did no more on the Flemish frontier.

The chief burden of the war henceforth lay on the Italian side. Here Lautrec, brother of Françoise of Foix, the King's mistress, was in command in the Milanese territory: the fatal system of appointing favourites' favourites begins. Lautrec was utterly unfit for his charge; for he was a good soldier, but a miserable governor: severe and undiscerning in his punishments, he roused the hatred of the Milanese, and found himself with an ill-paid, ill-equipped army face to face with the ablest leaders of the new League[3] now formed against Francis, Prosper Colonna for the Pope, and Pescara for the Emperor; in vain Lautrec

[1] Du Bellay, Mémoires, Coll. Univ. xvii. p. 147. [2] Ibid. p. 148.

[3] 'En ce temps, la Ligue entre le Pape Leon et l'Empereur estoit du tout jurée et confirmée, en laquelle entrerent le Seigneur Federic de Gonzague Marquis de Mantoue et les Florentins.' Ibid. p. 172.

appealed to Francis for money to pay his troops; promises were plenty, supplies scarce. He was swept out of Milan, and retreated towards Como, while the Cardinal de' Medici (afterwards Clement VII) entered the city with Pescara; the papal army sacked the place, and made a vast booty; they were allowed ten days to do it thoroughly. Throughout the winter the Imperialists continued strengthening themselves, while Lautrec still remained without money to pay the Swiss mercenaries, on whom he chiefly relied. In the spring, as he moved on Lodi, he found the Imperialists barring his way at La Bicocca, a country seat enclosed in a great moat, with room within for twenty thousand men: while he halted his Swiss came to him with the alternative—pay us or part with us; and he, as a middle course, offered to assault the Bicocca next day; he did so accordingly and met with a crushing repulse. This was the end of his Italian command and of the French occupation of the Duchy of Milan: the Swiss went sulkily home, and Lautrec withdrew across the Alps to Lyons, where he found the Court, and was welcomed with very black looks by the King. Being fierce-tempered, and chafing at his wrongs, he at once complained to Francis of his reception: 'No wonder,' replied the King, 'since you have lost me so fine a heritage as the Duchy of Milan.' 'But, Sire,' Lautrec boldly rejoined, 'your Majesty, not I, threw it away by sending no pay for the troops; the men-at-arms had served for eighteen months without a penny, and the Swiss had become utterly unmanageable.' Then the King said, 'But I sent you four hundred thousand crowns on your demand.' To Francis' astonishment Lautrec declared that he had never seen one penny of it. Hereon the old Lord of Semblançay, who had charge of the royal finances, was sent for: he acknowledged that he had received the King's command for the sum, and had actually collected the money, and that then the Regent, the King's mother, had taken the whole of it from him. Francis in fury hastened to his mother's apartments: she declared she had only taken money that had long been due to her, her own savings; and the Lord of Semblançay, who denied this, was

called on to make his words good. The luckless old man fell into the terrible hands of Du Prat, who was jealous of his authority over the finance; a long trial followed; the King chose a packed commission, and after much delay this faithful servant of the crown, at the age of sixty-two, a man whom all esteemed and honoured, and to whom Francis himself had delighted to give the name of 'Father,' perished on the gibbet[1]. Woe to him who crossed the path of Louise of Savoy or of Du Prat! Deep and deserved was the hatred which this iniquitous judicial murder roused throughout France.

Far more serious for France were the effects of this bad woman's passions, as they affected the Constable of Bourbon. Trouble had been brewing here too for some time, and we must look back a few years. Charles of Bourbon-Montpensier, head of the younger branch of the great House of Bourbon[2], was the most prominent and powerful feudal prince in France, one who so long as Francis remained childless could even aspire to the throne: he was in the prime of life, of high mettle, well-tried at Agnadello and Marignano, profuse and splendid in expense, haughty, highspirited. He was descended on the female side also from S. Louis; he had married his cousin, Susanne of Bourbon, heiress of the elder branch of that family; she was the granddaughter of Peter II of Bourbon, Lord of Beaujeu, and of Anne of France, who had ruled the land so well when Charles VIII was a minor. It had been settled at their wedding that each should make a general donation of all his or her goods in favour of the survivor. Thus placed at the head of this great House, Charles kept almost regal state at Moulins. Though Francis at first seemed willing to favour him, and gave him the Constable's sword, he soon began to cool. In 1520 at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, Henry VIII had bluntly said, when he saw the pride and prominence of the young Constable, that if he had such a subject in his kingdom he would not leave his head long on his shoulders!

[1] Du Bellay, Mémoires, Coll. Univ. xvii. pp. 227–229.
[2] See below for his pedigree, Table I. vol. iii.

Francis seems to have taken this to heart; he had also fallen deep into debt to the Constable; and this was enough to set the selfish King against him—one is never so bitter as against the man one has wronged;—so when war came in 1521, and Francis made four great military governments, Champagne, Picardy, Milan, and Guyenne, though Bourbon had raised at his own cost an army of eight hundred horse and six thousand foot, the King would not trust him with one of the commands, and refused him his right to lead the vanguard. This annoyed Charles exceedingly, and after the campaign he withdrew home, just in time to be present at his wife's death-bed. Then indeed his troubles began. There had long been feud between the royal ladies, Anne of France and Louise of Savoy; it now came to an outburst. Louise, advised again by Du Prat, threatened to claim the heritage of Susanne, and at the same moment offered her hand to the Constable, who rejected it with scorn. 'Never,' he cried, 'will I marry a shameless woman.' It must be ever uncertain whether Louise had really loved or hated him; at any rate, from that moment, if love there had been, it was turned to hate. A great state trial began, conducted with all the arts Du Prat knew so well. The high-tempered Prince was harassed on every side: the King would not pay him his due, and treated him as an enemy; Louise was likely to wrest from him his splendid possessions. In the August of 1523 the Court-party triumphed; the Parliament of Paris, to escape the odium of the actual judgment, passed the case over to the King's Council, meanwhile sequestrating all the Constable's goods.

When he had taken Hesdin two years before, the Constable had treated the servants of Charles V with marked attention, and had won the friendship of the House of Croy. This now bore fruit. The actual steps in the intrigue are unknown to us: but the result was that Charles and Bourbon became friends, and the negociations spread on to Henry VIII. A secret partition-treaty followed: Bourbon was to re-establish the ancient kingdom of Arles, Dauphiny, and Provence, with his

great domains adjoining, Auvergne, the Bourbonnais, and other places, the strongest district in central France: here his rear would be protected by the Alps, held on the other side by his friend the Emperor. Charles V claimed for his share the Duchy of Burgundy, Champagne, and Picardy; to Henry VIII was to fall the old English inheritance to west and south. It was a revival of the schemes of the old war of the Public Weal. In fact, Bourbon awakened the old echoes by declaring that he desired to redress the ill-government of the King. While this was being planned, the French King was at Lyons preparing busily for his great expedition into Italy. He was told by persons whose information could not be neglected, that Bourbon was deep in treason, and he went in person to Moulins to see him. There he found him ill, or feigning illness: and on receiving assurances of fidelity, and a promise that he would follow to Lyons the moment he was well enough to leave his bed, he bade him farewell at Moulins and returned. This act of confidence cost him dear: directly Bourbon could move, he fled, without attempting to raise the country round him, dreading rather to be shut up in France; he wandered with one faithful comrade through the Auvergne mountains. Thence he came down to the bridge of Vienne, but did not dare to cross it, though it was not guarded, lest he should be recognised; he therefore passed over the Rhone in a boat. On the Dauphiny side he found the roads full of soldiers marching towards Italy; wherefore he turned to his left, despairing of being able to cross the Alps without being recognised and stopped: he recrossed the Rhone above Lyons, and reached S. Claude, whither more than half a century before young Louis the Dauphin had come, when he too fled from the hostility of the King of France. Thence Bourbon passed through Switzerland, 'the Germanies' as it was then called, and came to Trent on the upper Adige, thence to Mantua, where the Duke received him well; thence to Piacenza, where he met Lannoy, viceroy of Naples, who had come to take the place of Prosper Colonna whose health had failed. After

tarrying awhile with him, he went down to Genoa, awaiting instructions from the Emperor, who was in Spain. But the Emperor, warm as he had been before, while Bourbon seemed to be a great power in the heart of France, now took but little heed to him when he appeared as a fugitive with a scanty following of friends. He told him he might cross into Spain, or he might follow the army in Italy under Lannoy. He chose the latter course: and instead of being a third party in a great league in which the other two were Charles V and Henry VIII, he fell into the poor position of a prince without a command, hanging on to an army in which he was not wanted. And now the French were vigorously attacked on every side: the Spaniards came down to Bayonne, but failed to take it; the English threatened Paris; early in 1524 they reached the Oise, about thirty miles from the capital.

The King, with the ground trembling under his feet, and uncertain how far the disaffection of Bourbon extended at home, had not ventured to leave Lyons: his army in the Milanese territory was commanded by Bonnivet, an incapable and dissolute courtier, who owed his appointment to the favour of Louise of Savoy. Without the hazard of a single battle, Lannoy and Pescara pushed the French completely out of Italy: in the retreat Bayard fell a victim to his commander's incapacity; for, being ordered to defend an untenable position in the rear of the retreating army, though he saw the mistake, he obeyed; there he was mortally wounded, and fell into Lannoy's hands. The care and admiration of his enemies soothed his last moments, and he died, as he had lived, a brave, honest, and God-fearing soldier. His body was carried into Dauphiny, where it was met by all the province, and buried with solemn state and real mourning at Grenoble, in the Convent of the Minims, which his uncle the Bishop had built.

Thus, as Lautrec had been thrust out of Italy in 1522, so was Bonnivet in 1524. And as the Italian expeditions ought by this time to have taught France what her weakness was, so the failure of the efforts of the allies to invade the kingdom might

equally have shown her where her true strength lay. The Spaniards were foiled at Bayonne; the English in Picardy; the Imperialists in Provence. Bourbon wished to penetrate northwards into Dauphiny, so as to join hands with his own friends, whom he still believed to be strong, and to form a centre round which the popular anger against the Queen Mother and Du Prat might gather force and form; and there was much to be said for the course; the Imperialist commanders however preferred the siege of Marseilles. The town defended itself with heroism, and Bourbon was compelled to fall back through the Estrelles to Nice, and thence by rough and difficult ways along the lovely Riviera di Ponente to Genoa: the French pursued and harassed him a great part of the way.

This rout of his enemy inflamed Francis with a fatal desire to crush him utterly, and at the same time to recover his lost prestige in Italy. Disregarding his older counsellors, who had seen the evils of Italian warfare, he plunged suddenly into the Alps, and, on emerging on the other side, found the Imperialists in the utmost confusion and weakness. Discouragement and sickness had wellnigh ruined them: Pescara had nothing with which to pay his troops, for the Emperor sent him and Bourbon no supplies, seeming to be almost as penniless as his predecessor. A strong force under Antonio da Leyva, one of the best of his veteran officers, was thrown into Pavia, while Pescara entrenched himself in the strong position of Lodi, and Bourbon hastened into Germany to raise a force of mercenaries. Francis, instead of striking hard at the disorganised army before Bourbon could return, sat down before Pavia, hoping speedily to reduce it. But Leyva was a stout soldier, and held out grimly, so giving the others time to take breath and gather strength. All seemed well for Francis; he felt powerful enough to detach, once more against his best advisers[1], ten thousand foot, five hundred men-at-arms, a body of light cavalry, and a strong band of artillery, under John Stewart the last Duke of Albany, with orders to push down into south

[1] La Palice was strongly opposed to the step.

Italy and seize Naples: a fatal blunder, as soon appeared. For the great name of Bourbon attracted a large army of adventurers from Germany; and Pescara, thus reinforced and refreshed, came out again from Lodi and made for Pavia. Once more the wiser and more experienced captains were unheeded: they advised the King to raise the siege, and march out to some strong position, whence he might easily weary out the relieving force. They knew by how slight a tie such an army was held together, and that Pescara's funds were exhausted. But the King's favourites, full of their boastful ideas of chivalry, easily persuaded him that 'a French King does not change his plans for his enemies'; and Francis determined to await Pescara's coming in his fortified camp. Bonnivet gave this advice, and once more ruined his master in Italy.

There are three ways in which a besieging army may act in the presence of a relieving force: it may break up entirely and go out to face the coming foe, sure that if the relief is defeated, the siege will go on again as before: or if strong enough, it may hold its siege-works with diminished force, and detach an army sufficient to check the oncoming enemy, as Frederick the Great did at Prague, and the Germans at the siege of Paris in 1870: or it may entrench itself in its strong position, and await the coming up of the relieving army. The second and safest course Francis had rendered impossible by sending so large a force towards Naples; the first he was too proud to choose; he therefore took the most perilous of the alternatives, and awaited the foe in his camp. When a besieging army does this, it is liable in its turn to be besieged between the walls of the city it beleaguers and the lines of the relieving force. And this befell Francis at Pavia.

His position was one of great strength: he lay to the eastward of the town, across the road to Lodi, by which the relieving force would come up. The Ticino sheltered his right: his left lay within the wall of the Certosa Park, or the Park of Mirabello, as it was called, which was like a fortress in strength: lastly a stout rampart guarded the whole of his front. Here a

prudent general would have calmly waited till his opponents were worn out, and that in the case of Pescara's army must have happened speedily. In fact the attack of the Imperialists on the King arose from those very difficulties which had forced Lautrec to assault the Bicocca four years before.

On S. Matthias' Day (Feb. 24th, 1525), Pescara, after having skirmished in vain before the entrenchments in hope of drawing the French out to battle, broke down a long piece of the Mirabello wall, and got inside the Park, thus flanking the left wing of the French. Here he was assailed by a violent cannonade from the artillery planted to defend that flank; and his Spaniards and Germans suffered terribly; 'you could see nothing but heads and arms flying in the air[1].' To escape from this 'valley of death' to some shelter beyond, the troops ran: and Francis seeing it, thought they were flying in confusion. Immediately he sallied out; whereby he not only got between his own artillery and the enemy, so as to hinder it from playing on them[2], but by moving due north he left his centre and right, to the south, bared of support. As he lengthened his front in this way, the Spaniards attacked the Swiss on his right, who gave way and retreated towards Milan: his Landsknechts charged the Imperialists boldly; but were driven in by 'two big battalions of Germans.' The King, who thought all going well, seeing only what was in front of him, soon became aware that his army behind him had melted away, and that the Spaniards were getting between him and the town, and cutting him off from his camp. At last after plenty of fierce fighting, at which he was ever good, for he was strong and brave, his horse was killed and fell on him: he lay bruised and wounded on the ground. Then Lannoy came up, and Francis surrendered his sword to him.

This ended the battle. If Marignano was a great triumph of the men-at-arms, the French noble chivalry, Pavia was their destruction: never had there been greater slaughter of nobles:

[1] Cimber et Danjou, Archives Curieuses, I ii. p. 281.
[2] Du Bellay, Mémoires, Coll. Univ. xvii. p. 391.

and those who had not fallen were prisoners. The unworthy Bonnivet paid with his life for the foolish advice he had given the King: Louis de la Trémoille, La Palice the Constable, and other generals perished, so did Francis of Lorraine, and the Duke of Suffolk, Richard de la Pole, the attainted heir of the Suffolk dukedom, whom they called 'Rozeblanche' to distinguish him from Charles Brandon the new Duke[1], the husband of Mary Tudor. Henry of Albret, King of Navarre[2], and the Count of S. Pol, were taken, but escaped soon after: the Duke of Alençon, who was in command of the rear, fled, leaving all to ruin without striking a blow. He was so overwhelmed with shame that ere long he died of grief, leaving no heirs; his duchy fell in to the Crown. The battle itself had been short and sharp, but the carnage lasted all the day[3]: the wreck was immense; the flight headlong; the pillage all that hungry victors could desire. The wretched shreds of the King's fine army wandered back as they could, plundered and harassed by the Italians and mountaineers; the remainder came dribbling into Lyons, half-naked and starved. One may conjecture the utter consternation there, when the whole extent of the disaster became known. Louise of Savoy, supported by the Duke of Vendôme and Du Prat, set herself as best she could to stem the tide of dejection, and to succour their sore plight[4]. Albany, who was lying in the neighbourhood of Rome with his army, was informed of the King's capture by a messenger from the Pope. He put his artillery on board ship, and abandoned his army to its fate; accompanied by all his chief gentlemen and captains, he sailed off to Marseilles: while the 'poor camp, very desolate at losing its grand-master who was a prisoner,' had to make its way by land; and, says the chronicler, 'it was piteous to see the poor folk, who scarce

[1] Who was made Duke of Suffolk in 1513.

[2] Husband of Margaret of France, Francis' sister.

[3] Guicciardini puts the Imperialist loss at about 700; the French loss at over 8000. Storia d' Italia, l. xv. A. 1525 (p. 459, ed. 1580).

[4] Cimber et Danjou, Archives Curieuses, I. ii. p. 289, sqq. for an account of their plight at Lyons.

dared to look behind them for fear of seeing an enemy on their heels[1]. Some died of hunger, others of disease, others sold clothes and horses for food: a third of them perished: the rest reached Lyons 'so worn out and poor from poverty, hunger, thirst and miseries . . . that after they had eaten and drunk, of those who took too much at once some died outright, and others lost their senses[2].'

Meanwhile the King was lodged in the castle at Pizzighitone; and thence wrote two letters, one to his mother, the Regent Louise; the other to his great rival, Charles. They throw some light on his character; for they prove how little true nobleness and dignity he showed in adversity. Instead of bearing his captivity with calmness and fortitude, he chafed and fretted under the loss of his wonted pleasures; at one moment he called for death to end his woes, while at another he was ready to sign disastrous terms of peace, meaning to break faith so soon as ever he might be free again. The letter to his mother is interesting only as giving us the original of that epigrammatic phrase which history reshaped for him, when she puts into his mouth the well-known words 'Tout est perdu, fors l'honneur.' French history is full of such half-true phrases; and it is a pleasure to be able to trace one of them to its cradle. 'Of all things,' he writes, 'there remains to me naught save my honour and my life which is safe.' And how long was he to keep that highly-prized honour? The weariness and misery of constraint soon drove him to acts which showed that his sense of honour and kingly faith was gone. This we see also in the letter addressed to Charles V, which is humble, false, and almost cringing: impatient of his misfortune, he thinks his great rival will be generous and easy, and by so acting will 'make an acquisition instead of an useless captive, nay, will have evermore a King as his slave[3].' Charles, on the other hand, when first he heard the news of this crowning victory,

[1] Archives Curieuses, I. ii. p. 292.
[2] Ibid. p. 293.
[3] The MS. of this letter is among the MSS. Bethune, No. 8471, quoted in the Archives Curieuses, II. i. p. 293.

was studiously humble and quiet: but nevertheless he sagaciously scanned the political horizon, weighed the courses to be pursued, and finally carried out the plans which appeared to be best for his own interests. France, stupefied at first by the mishap, soon began to recover hope. The Regent, for all her vices and faults, was proud and strong; she gathered what force she could at Lyons, and looked round for help. The peril was very great; France disturbed at home, the people, groaning under heavy taxes, lamented the good King Louis, the nobles and cities were disaffected. When the Duke of Vendôme[1], at that time governor of Picardy and the Isle of France, passed through Paris on his way to Lyons to join the Regent, the chief citizens offered him the government of the kingdom, saying that 'all the other good towns would aid him to that end[2].' 'And this they did,' adds Du Bellay, 'because of the hatred they felt for the Chancellor Du Prat.' But Vendôme shrank from the thought of civil strife at such a moment; and the proposed civic revolt against the autocratic monarchy came to nothing: for he would have nothing to do with that which 'would derogate from the authority of Kings, by naming Regents whom they would; which Regents would hold their power from the goodwill of the communities and towns, a thing that would put a bridle in the mouth of kings and take from princes their pre-eminence[3].' The elements of resistance to absolutism in France have never been able to cohere together into a solid power.

Not only were there anxieties at home, but the frontiers were also threatened. On the side of Germany a popular movement, closely connected with the religious excitement of the time, pushed a fierce and cruel rabble into Lorraine, whence they proposed to enter France. But they were met by the Duke of Guise and the Count of Vaudemont, his brother, at the head

[1] Another Charles of Bourbon, a distant cousin of the Constable.

[2] Mémoires de Mess. Martin du Bellay, Bk. III. Coll. Univ. xviii. pp. 4, 5.

[3] So says Belleforest in his History of France, ii. p. 1442; also in his Chroniques (ed. 1572), p. 549.

of the garrisons of Burgundy and Champagne, and were easily dispersed. It was thought that during these troubles Lannoy would march his army, flushed with victory, from the Po to the Rhone, while the hated Regent and still more odious Du Prat were helpless and without troops. But Lannoy had no money to pay his men, and could not undertake so large a venture. Meanwhile negociations began between Charles V and Francis; the Emperor demanding, as ransom, first, that Bourbon should be invested with Provence and Dauphiny, joined to his own lands in Auvergne, and should receive the title of king; and secondly, that the Duchy of Burgundy should be given over to the Emperor as the inheritor of the lands and rights of Charles the Bold. But the King of France would not listen for a moment.

And now the King of England and most of the Italian states, alarmed at the great power of the Emperor, began to change sides. Henry VIII came first. He signed a treaty of neutrality with the Regent, in which it was agreed that not even for the sake of the King's deliverance should any part of France be torn from her. The Italians joined in a league to restore Francis to liberty, and to secure the independence of Italy: and Turkey was called on for help; the long series of friendly dealings between France and the Padishah, which aimed at curbing the power of the Austro-Spanish House, may be said to date from this time[1].

The Emperor now felt that Francis was not in secure keeping at Pizzighitone; he observed that the King seemed to be gaining influence over the incoherent, ill-paid, and disaffected Imperial army; and he distrusted Charles of Bourbon: he therefore gave orders that Francis should at once be removed to Spain; and Lannoy, though he had promised he would not take his royal prisoner thither, on getting the command to sail with him, obeyed without much ceremony[2].

[1] See La Vallée, Hist. des Français, ii. p. 325.

[2] The 'Prinse et délivrance de François Premier' in Cimber and Danjou, I. ii. p. 295, tells us that Lannoy tempted the King on board to see

Francis was set ashore at Valencia, and received with wonderful welcome: dances, festivals, entertainments of every kind, served to relieve his captivity; it was like a restoration to life! But this did not suit the views of the Emperor, who wished to weary the King into giving up all thought of resistance: he trusted to his impatient and frivolous character; his mistake, as he found to his cost, lay in thinking that a man of such a character would keep his word. He therefore had him removed from Valencia to Madrid, where he was kept in close and galling confinement, in a high dreary chamber, where he could not even see out of the windows. This had the desired effect. The King talked of abdicating; he fell ill of ennui, and was like to die: at last he could hold out no longer, and abandoning all thought of honourable action, agreed to shameful terms, consoling himself with a private protest against the validity of the deed, as having been done under compulsion[1].

The Treaty of Madrid, signed 14 January, 1526, ceded to Charles more than a man of his sagacity ought to have felt it safe to accept. It was agreed that within six weeks of his deliverance Francis should restore to Charles the possessions of Charles of Burgundy, 'whereof at his death Mary his daughter, grandmother of Charles of Spain and Germany, was seized, and had been despoiled by Louis XI; namely, (1) the Duchy of Burgundy, with the County of Charolais and other dependencies; (2) the Viscounty of Auxonne and S. Laurent, dependent on the Free County of Burgundy.' The French claims on Flanders, Artois, and Hainault, on Milan and Naples, were abandoned; Francis undertook to espouse Eleanor, Dowager Queen of Portugal, sister of Charles; and lastly, the Dauphin Francis and Henry Duke of Orleans were to be placed as hostages in the Emperor's hands, till the stipulations were fulfilled. Nothing was said respecting Bourbon's kingdom in the south and east of France; he was restored to his estates and dignities only.

a review of ships, and having got him there, sailed away with him to his utter consternation.

[1] This protest was drawn up before notaries a few hours before the Treaty of Madrid was signed.

'All which the King accorded willingly; for he held that whatever promise he made while a prisoner guarded, and not on his faith, was of no value: and he thought that he could, on payment of money, afterwards get back his children[1],' the hostages. So utterly had a few months' captivity sapped the moral force of the monarch[2]! How much better would it have been for his true dignity had he held to his first intention. The Duchess of Alençon (who had nursed Francis in his illness) proposed to return into France, now that he was well again, carrying powers from the King, whereby he transferred the government to the Dauphin, with permission for his coronation (in accordance with ancient French usage) under the Regency of Louise of Savoy[3]; for Francis had warmly declared that 'he would live and die a prisoner rather than do a thing which might injure his kingdom[4].' Now, however, in spite of his fine protestations, he chose the more unworthy course; for he swore that if he found himself unable to keep his word, he would honourably return into captivity; and forthwith protested that his oath and his engagement were null and void. Joyful to win his liberty at any price, even at the price of his reputation, he handed over the boys his sons as hostages, and riding gaily into France declared that he would hear nothing of the Treaty of Madrid, that he would enjoy his life to the full, that he would pay no penalty for his blunders and follies.

Francis, most autocratic of princes, 'above the law,' who never convoked his people together in their Estates, now found it good to use very different language;—he declared that 'he could not ratify nor fulfil the engagements of the Madrid treaty, for he had no right to make them; to do so would violate his

[1] Du Bellay, Bk. III. Coll. Univ. xviii. p. 18.

[2] What can be better than the summary of Tavannes, Coll. Univ. xxvi. p. 17: 'Il est delivré prenant une femme, donnant de l'argent et des promesses de la Bourgogne, quitte la souveraineté de Flandres, donne ses enfans en hostage; aussitost delivré rompt le traicté; dit n'avoir peu donner sa foi prisonnier, ny moins aliéner le Duché de Bourgogne sans le consentiment des Estats.'

[3] Champollion, Captivité du Roi François, i. p. 425, where a facsimile of the document is given; it is dated Nov. 1525, from 'Madrit.'

[4] Du Bellay, Coll. Univ. xviii. p. 16.

duties towards his people, and his coronation-oath.' Yet even so he did not convoke the Estates, nor any form of representation of his people, nor even a general assembly of notables, in which the voice of truth might possibly have been heard: but he held 'a bed of justice' at Cognac, a gathering of grandees named by himself, together with that submissive body, the Parliament of Paris. This assembly followed the example set them by the Estates of Tours under Louis XI: they declared at once that the King had exceeded his powers in giving up a province of France: deputies from the Duchy of Burgundy appeared, through whom that province refused to be severed from France. They added that neither the treaty nor the royal oath was binding, the former as not having been the act of the King, the latter as having been exacted from him when in bondage: and that he therefore was not bound either to give up Burgundy or to return into Spain. One counsellor, Bishop Poncher, whose honesty exceeded his prudence, gave his opinion that Francis ought to go back: he only thereby marked himself out for a prison and death. Lannoy, who, on behalf of his master Charles V, was present at Cognac, saw at once that the French King was determined not to keep faith, and that war must follow. At first Henry VIII, whose supposed statesman-like care for the 'Balance of Power' is a delusion, had thought to gain much advantage from the state of France. He urged on his Imperial ally the partition of the country; claimed for himself to be crowned King at Paris, to have the old English possessions and more, while the rest of France should be shared between Charles and Bourbon[1]. But he soon found that this scheme could not be carried out; Charles was too powerful to be his cat's-paw. So, in the autumn of 1525, Henry had veered round and had made a treaty with Louise of Savoy, the base of which was the integrity of France. This was followed in May 1526 by a treaty, signed at Cognac by Francis, with the Pope, with Venice, and with Francesco Maria Sforza, the last

[1] See Henry's Instructions to Tunstal and Wingfield, March 30, 1525. State Papers, vol. vi.

Duke of that race; this was the 'Holy League' of the period: devout Henry of England, Protector of the Faith, was declared the champion of this alliance. Clement VII, roused to enthusiasm, dreamed that he was the instrument destined by Providence to achieve at last the independence of Italy. The Emperor, he saw, was much embarrassed by the new combination, and at the same time anxious for Germany, which was both filled with turbulent movement, and threatened from the East: Francis, he thought, would throw himself heart and soul into the war: thoughts of advantage and vengeance, and a desire to recover fame and honour, would act as spurs to stimulate him; Italy, once cleared of the Spaniards, would grow to be a powerful and harmonious federation; its spiritual head the Medicean at Rome, its temporal chief the Medicean at Florence.

Francis was as little likely to be heroic when free as when a captive. Misfortune degrades the unworthy soul: and the King of France came back from Spain having lost both reputation and honour, and only eager to plunge once more into that sea of dissipations at Paris, from which he had been so long excluded; —'that Lethe stream,' as Tavannes bitterly calls it, 'in which the captains sent into Italy are drowned[1].' He paid little heed to the calls of his allies: a new round of pleasures, a fresh favourite, engaged him: he was not eager either to emulate the glories of Marignano, or to wipe out the disgrace of Pavia; his policy at home was simply 'give me money and be quiet.' The friendly hand formerly stretched out to learned men tinged with reform opinions was now withheld; for the King had no more interest in any such thing; the country was overwhelmed with debt: a few acts of severity against the financiers, whom Louise of Savoy detested, were both convenient, and likely to quiet the down-trodden people. Taxes, corruption, arbitrary rule, at home; ill-faith, and failure in war and policy, abroad: these things are the results of the reign of this most brilliant of French monarchs.

When all Italy was in a ferment, longing to welcome Francis

[1] Tavannes, Collect. Univ. xxvi. p. 9.

as its captain, eager with him to destroy the Spanish power in the Italian Peninsula, the King sent only a poor four thousand men, while he stayed behind, idly amusing himself, and perhaps thinking that he was, to the letter, keeping his agreement with Charles. Left without a head, the Italian confederation soon showed itself powerless. Clement VII, with characteristic weakness and cunning, tried to intrigue with Pescara, the general of the Spanish in Italy: Pescara played with him, and lured him to his ruin. The whole project fell to pieces: the Imperialists, unshaken, held their ground, and took Milan; Sforza yielded, after the castle of Milan had undergone a siege, and there was no sign of help. The Pope had sent an army into the Neapolitan kingdom: Lannoy, landing at Gaieta, held it in check, while a host of Landsknechts under their famous captain Frundsberg descended from the Alps, crossed the valley of the Po unopposed, and rolled on cursing and wrangling, plundering and clamouring for pay, towards the Eternal City. These wild adventurers were chiefly Lutherans, friends of the most Catholic Emperor, coming to overthrow the head of the Church: Charles of Bourbon hastened to meet them at the Trebbia, and was warmly welcomed by them as their true chief and leader. It is singular to notice how deep an impression the Constable had made on the Germans, and how eagerly they followed him. Under his guidance they climbed the Apennines behind Bologna. It was doubtful whether they aimed at Florence or at Rome: the Duke of Urbino, who was watching them, fell back into Tuscany to cover the rich valley of the Arno, while Clement made truce with Lannoy, and weakly trusted that the Germans would respect the terms he had made with the Spaniard. But they knew their own minds: Bourbon hoped with one blow to destroy the Holy League at head-quarters; the German mercenaries were eager for the secular spoils of Rome. So they pressed on unopposed to the walls of the world's capital. The ramparts were at once attacked. Bourbon was killed by a ball at the first assault. Benvenuto Cellini tells us[1] that his own hand aimed the

[1] Vita di Benvenuto Cellini, scritta di sua mano propria, i. p. 118 (ed. 1806).

fatal piece, while others declare that the shot was fired by a priest. The fall of their leader only inflamed the assailants: they poured over the walls into the city (6 May, 1527); the Pope, who had vainly rested on the hope of succour from the Viceroy of Naples, fled to the castle of S. Angelo: a frightful destruction of works of art ensued. Rome was then at her very height of artistic splendour; for months the lawless soldiery pillaged the city, quarrelled over their booty, wasted and destroyed the most beautiful and costly things that the world possessed. The Pope capitulated, and became a prisoner[1]. As when he heard of the great triumph of Pavia, Charles had been to all appearance humble and moderate; so when his friends held the Pope a captive, he ordered processions to be made in Spain, and prayers offered up for the Pontiff's deliverance;—a single word from his own mouth would have been more efficacious. It was a terrible moment for Clement VII: his plans frustrated, his family ejected from Florence by a revolution; Italy prostrate under the conqueror's heel; himself a captive:—such was the end of the brilliant hopes with which but a year before he had cheated and dazzled himself. It is little to be wondered at, that contemporaries held Clement to be 'the most unfortunate of Popes.'

The news of this great and central mishap roused Francis to some activity. He declared the Treaty of Madrid broken; and Charles, with good reason, accused him of ill-faith. Then Francis declared loudly that 'he had lied through his throat,' and challenged him to single combat: when the Imperial envoy came he refused even to listen to him. Still, this new-born energy made no change in the adverse course of his affairs. In the territory of Naples, Lautrec, inefficient as ever, failed to crush the Prince of Orange in his retreat: and having, at the advice of Peter of Navarre, laid siege to Naples by land, while the Genoese fleet under Andrea Doria blockaded the town by sea, he saw his army melt away from want and pestilence, while

[1] 'So that one wittily said it was now true, Papa non potest errare, "The pope could not wander," as cooped up and confined.' Fuller, Church History, Bk. V. Cent. xvi. (iii. 34, ed. Brewer).

his allies on the sea suddenly changed sides, and threw supplies into the hard-pressed city. For Francis had shown clearly that he disliked the Genoese, and was doing his best to ruin their commerce: and Andrea Doria knew that his enemies at the French court were very powerful. So he listened to the suggestions of some captive Spaniards; made overtures to Charles V[1], and suddenly changing sides struck a death-blow at French influence and power in Italy. Lautrec died before Naples; his soldiers perished or were made prisoners; Doria swept the French out of Genoa, and set up a republican form of government, refusing for himself the dignity and title of Doge. This loss of Genoa, now under Imperial protection, was fatal to the ambition of France. It cut Italy in half; it gave Charles V a firm hold on the northern part of the peninsula; it enabled him to connect his Spanish with his German dominions, and invited him to take an active part in German affairs, and to cease to be merely a Spanish king. For Genoa was the best harbour for the Spanish fleets, and the opened doorway for the Spanish armies; entering in there, they could secure Milan and the Valtelline, and all the ways over the Alps into Tirol; whence, as need might call, they could pass either into Bavaria or into the Austrian Duchies.

From this moment the character, the policy, the power of Charles take a fresh course. He amazes Europe. The feeble, ugly, spiritless boy of a few years back has become at one stride the giant of the world: men wonder whether his great abilities, or his unrivalled statesmanship, or his vast material resources, are most to be dreaded. He has secured himself safely in Spain; he has nothing to fear in the Netherlands; he is supreme in Italy. Clement VII, sagacious and supple, sees that Charles alone can restore both the captive glory of the Papal throne and the fallen fortunes of the Medicean house at Florence. To this have his great ambitions shrunk. Free Italy is thought of no more: the Medicean interests again step into the foreground: and Italy may be left, a prey to all comers,

[1] For details see Du Bellay, Collect. Univ. xviii. pp. 92–95.

in her 'fatal gift of beauty[1],' to be a 'geographical expression' for three centuries. Napoleon Bonaparte first broke the yoke thus laid on Italy; and Napoleon III has the honour of having cut her bonds; but she owes her new national life to her own virtues and prudence. Great is the age, and happy the eyes which have seen the end of this long 'death in life'; and have ollowed the restoration of Italy to something of the rank due to her genius, her place in Europe, her splendid memories: her grand historical heritage of the past, her present moderation and singular power of organisation, augur for her a noble future among the nations of Europe.

An army had been sent into Lombardy, to penetrate southwards, and to co-operate with Lautrec before Naples. But Antonio da Leyva held this force in check, and eventually caught and ruined it at Landriano in 1529.

Clement and Charles having now made terms (Treaty of Barcelona, June, 1529), and the second war having closed with the utter defeat of the French, Francis, whose personal interest in this struggle appears always to have been very slight, was ready for peace. He had lost both his armies, and had no money with which to raise a third: he also was alarmed for his sons, whose health and character seemed to be suffering in Spain. Nor was Charles V less willing: he had gained largely; he too was penniless and in straits; he had before him much to do in Germany, where things were very uneasy; he wanted also to go into Italy to settle affairs and to be crowned Emperor: since the battle of Mohacz (A.D. 1526) the Turk had become infinitely more formidable to Austria. So it did not require much to bring about peace. Negociations were opened at Cambrai between Margaret of Austria and Louise of Savoy, and ended in a Treaty, 'the Ladies' Peace' (5th August, 1529), by which the differences between the two powers were partly

[1] 'Italia, Italia! O tu, cui feo la sorte
Dono infelice di bellezza, ond' hai
Funesta dote d'infiniti guai,
Che in fronte scritti per gran doglia porte.'
Vincenzio Filicaia. Sonnet 87.

composed, if not finally adjusted. The terms were somewhat more favourable to France than those of Madrid. The Duchy of Burgundy was not given over to the Emperor; the French princes were to be released on payment of ransom, in which Du Prat tried to cheat Charles by debasing the coin of the realm, but was detected and put to shame[1]: France gave up all claims on Flanders and Artois: everything was abandoned in Italy: the chivalrous Francis, the soul of honour, did not hesitate to sacrifice all his allies; there was not a word said for one of them. He added one more proof of his baseness by again protesting secretly against his public act.

Charles, intending to make his ground in Italy quite sure, at once sailed from Spain. Escorted by Andrea Doria, with a splendid army at his back, he landed at Genoa, and set himself to arrange all that was needed in the Peninsula. Francesco Maria Sforza was established firmly at Milan, and the unhappy city overwhelmed with burdens; for Charles, ever in want of money, made Sforza pay dearly for his honours, and Sforza in his turn made the Milanese pay for the privilege of having him for their duke: the Duke of Savoy, now as ever the sport of political change[2], threw himself into the arms of the stranger, and Charles secured the all-important passes which opened, as the case might be, Dauphiny to Italy, or Piedmont and Lombardy to France: Venice, the old friend of France, was heavily mulcted, and reduced in power: Florence, the pay-money of the Pope, was handed over, a slave, to the tyrant rule of a bastard of the Medicean House, Alexander, the first Duke.

Thus with an aristocratic Republic at Genoa, which secured

[1] M. du Bellay, Collect. Univ. xviii. p. 128, and Dupleix, quoted in the Observation on the passage: 'De ce beau mêlange il ne revint aux François que perte, honte, et confusion, et au Chancelier particulièrement blâme et reproche.'

[2] Just as, nearly three centuries later, the Prince of Ligne said of a later Duke of Savoy, 'His conduct reminds one of that formerly pursued by the Dukes of Lorraine as well as the Dukes of Bavaria. Their geography prevents them from being men of honour.' Memoirs of Prince Eugene, ed. 1811, p. 24.

his entrance into Italy and the safe transit of Spanish troops from across the Mediterranean, with a hereditary Duke at Florence dependent on him; with the dangerous powers to right and left, Venice and Milan, strongly curbed, the conqueror had Italy at his feet: she became a mere bridge between Spain and Germany. All the old barriers were gone: the way to universal empire seemed open to the rising fortunes of the House of Austria: the fresh-blossoming culture of the Renaissance was trodden down like flowers on the hard pathway of these contending ambitions. And Charles felt all this: he was resolved to come forth as a great monarch; and was determined that the coronation at Bologna should be the fitting prelude to his advance. In that great ceremony the head of the spiritual world consecrated him to the headship of the secular world: and once more the alliance of the Holy Roman Empire with the Papacy was declared to mankind: a chequered struggle lasting a quarter of a century was to follow, ending, happily for mankind, with the final overthrow of this grand medieval theory of the world's government. Charles V was the last Emperor crowned in Italy. After him, the House of Hapsburg produced more than one able and ambitious prince; but they aimed no longer at a great domination in Europe; theirs was the humbler task of trying 'to turn the German empire into an Austrian military monarchy[1].'

At this moment, however, all seems to point the other way; no longer shall there be treaties managed by the ladies, nor war led by half-independent captains, nor Turks knocking imperiously at the Iron Gate, nor new ideas in religion like a sharp wedge, cleaving Germany asunder. The Spanish days are over; the silent, pondering, timid-seeming young man stands forward as the world's centre, cautious still, slow-moving, deliberate in act and wary, a real king among men. He no longer will listen to the vehement yet kindly and moderate Cardinal Gattinara, whose voice was ever in favour of gentle dealing with the struggling parties in Germany: he now begins

[1] Bryce, Holy Roman Empire (ed. 1864), p. 137.

to feel the influence of a very different personage, Cardinal Granvelle from Franche-Comté, a somewhat low-minded, strong, and cunning personage, author of that system which Charles V now began to introduce, the system of 'disciplining Europe[1].' His former rivals, Henry of England and Francis of France, shrink away before him, as he towers head and shoulders higher than the highest monarchs of the world.

[1] Michelet, Histoire de France, viii. p. 331 (ed. 1855).

BOOK III.

THE LAST OF THE VALOIS.

A.D. 1530–1589.

INTRODUCTION.

THE defeat of Pavia and the consequences which flowed from it both weakened the character and endangered the position of Francis I. He returned to find France disordered, miserable, even defiant; and with impaired strength of body and damaged moral character he had to assert his rights among the powers of Europe, and to endeavour to hold with a failing hand the intricate threads of French policy. So great a trial coming on an enfeebled nature ended, as might have been expected, in a terrible failure. Stern severity, self-devotion, thrift, singleness of aim, were the qualities needed in the man who should carry France through the coming troubles: instead of these, we find a gay and gallant prince, artistic, literary, kindly, with nothing strong or heroic in the composition of his nature. He pardoned all Charles of Bourbon's people, even the traitorous Bishop of Autun; 'he took vengeance on no man, but forgave all who returned to him and sought for mercy[1].' He was also, as Sismondi says[2], 'a complete stage-prince, thinking only of the momentary effect, forgetful of consequences, apt to pass swiftly from one excess to another.'

[1] Du Bellay, Collect. Univ. xvii. p. 279.

[2] Sismondi, Hist. des Français, xvi. p. 455 (ed. 1833), 'Prince tout théâtral.'

How could such a leader prosper? There is no period of French history so complicated as that of the five or six years from 1530 to 1536; none which required sounder judgment or more patient handling; none so critical for the ultimate fortunes of France. It is hardly too much to say that these years decided the whole future of French politics and national life.

It is among the gravest of the misfortunes of France that at this moment she entrusted herself to one so brilliant and so uncertain. The ship that rides at one anchor in the storm must have that anchor strong and true, not merely bright and polished. And this is just where Francis failed: artistic taste, ready wit, intelligence, he had; the sound qualities which alone could secure safety in the storm were wanting. That terrible doctrine that the King is the 'fountain of justice' and above law, was in full credit in his days. 'We know,' says the Parliament of Paris to Francis, 'we know well that you are above the laws; still, we venture to say that you ought not to will nor would desire to will all that you can;' thus could the lawyers destroy all true sense of duty, and think they have provided a safeguard by appealing to a vague higher law to which royalty should be responsible. No wonder that Francis trampled them under foot, even as he had crushed the turbulent nobles, with new and terrible penalties: as he broke on the wheel those who robbed with arms in hand, or committed murder, and issued fresh enactments against any who coined money, so he crushed all independence of the law, and made the submissive conservatism of the legal mind a passive instrument of his autocratic will.

The Treaty of Cambrai[1] marks the beginning of this most ruinous period of the policy of Francis: he sacrificed his allies to what seemed to be his private interests, showing a selfishness which recoiled with vehemence on his own head. In the Treaty of Madrid he had sacrificed France by giving up the Duchy of Burgundy, and had sent his children into captivity that he might himself get out: at Cambrai he sacrificed his

[1] See above, p. 213.

Italian allies without a word; no consideration of honour or of royal faith availed to stay his hand. By these two treaties France was excluded from Italy, her earthly Paradise, a penalty which had in it the wholesome cleansing power of most misfortunes; had she but heroism enough, enough of strength and honest industry, enough of purity and simplicity, she might still make her own home, the France which teemed with blessings, a better Paradise for herself. Unfortunately, the French nation was left to its fate, while the Court pursued with the eagerness of childhood the flattering prize of its Italian ambitions. While it strove to conquer Italy, Italy was completely and banefully mastering it; during these days the Court becomes thoroughly Italianised. Francis himself, true to one love only, the love of letters, was fascinated by the Italian side of the Renaissance; he thought that all true culture must come thence. Consequently, Italian influences ever grew in strength, and with them grew the idea that at any sacrifice France must recover her foothold in the Peninsula. For this unsubstantial object she thrust from her her true greatness. Had there been by the side of Francis a Richelieu to shape his policy, how different the outcome would have been! Unfortunately for him, he was as ill-provided with advisers as he was weak of grasp and character.

PART I.

THE AGE OF THE ITALIAN WARS.

CHAPTER I.

THE STATE OF FRANCE, A.D. 1530–1536.

1. *France at Home.*

THE state of France at this time was far from reassuring. The chroniclers of the day are for the most part silent as to the condition of the country, in which they took no interest; the courts of kings, the camp and shows of war, alone attract attention, while the true history of the time, the growth and sway of thought, the well-being of the people, the healthy development of national life, are deemed scarce worthy of a passing notice.

We gather that, especially in the west, the nobles had become very independent and freehanded since the mishaps of Pavia and Madrid: the Great Days of Poictiers were held in order to bring them under some control; here and there a nobleman was brought to the block, a castle or two levelled to the ground, and heavy penalties inflicted on turbulent robbers. There exists a cotemporary document which tells us what the elements of a noble house should be; we see that a small family was even then deemed essential. A gentleman must not have more than three sons; if he be rich, then the eldest son and one of the others must be soldiers, and the third a churchman or a lawyer; if he be poor, then only one must follow arms, the other two

the professions; exception is taken to medicine, which no gentleman should follow. The eldest son should have no children; the fewer daughters the better; 'they are the ruin of houses'; fortunately there are convents. In the selfish narrowness of these precepts we see why all true nobleness died out of the great houses of France. Meanwhile there was growing up in the towns a powerful body of wealthy citizens, who had no wish for any reforms or any constitutional freedoms: the small landholders in the country were gradually absorbed by them, being reduced by bad seasons and the difficulties of tillage to sell their little heritages at a low price to those who had money to buy.

Society still detested the usurer and financier, who seemed to flourish on mismanagement and to fatten while others starved. Louise of Savoy hated them, though indeed she ought to have had some sympathy with them: Francis saw that their punishment would be both popular and profitable, and squeezed them accordingly; he perhaps did not know that in his own mother's chests lay untold ill-gotten wealth, and that just vengeance ought to have begun with her.

Meanwhile the seasons were bad, and famine and pestilence raged for five years from 1528; 'the elements all seemed to have conspired against mankind to execute the judgment of God[1].' No wholesome frosts came all these years; insects and vermin multiplied, so that they were a plague, eating up the fruits of the earth. The luckless peasants were fain to fill themselves with the refuse of gardens; when this resource failed they wandered abroad and gathered what they could in the fields, mallows, thistles, weeds more or less wholesome; these they boiled in caldrons, adding, if they were so lucky as to have it, a handful of bran; they made them bread of beech-mast, of acorns, even of fern roots; on these they miserably subsisted. 'Great pity was to see bands of poor women, thin, weary, and starved with cold and

[1] J. I. Marcouville, in Cimber et Danjou, Archives Curieuses, I. iii. p. 408.

hunger, surrounded by their children in like case, who from sore famine cried and wailed to their mothers, while these looked at them so piteously that methinks nothing can be compared to it[1].' Great numbers perished. The taxes were as heavy as ever. One sees in the pages of Rabelais how grim was the contrast between the thriftless waste at court and the sunken cheeks and ragged garb that covered the bone and sinew of France.

For the Court was never more gay or brilliant. Young princes came from Germany, 'a coarser nation,' to get polish there; for all allowed that French manners were very pretty and polite. And the royal expenditure went merrily on. The 'King of culture' could not stay his hand. We have a list of the outgoings of the Privy Purse[2] from the year 1528, the very year in which this distress began; there we read of payments for pictures and sculpture, singers and organists; to a musician for a new spinet; for three boxes of musical instruments, for a splendid bronze horse and its rider, for costly jewels, a diamond cross, priceless pearls, and the like; for furs, velvets, and silks of Genoa; for rare trees from Provence, to be planted at Fontainebleau; for beasts and birds from Tunis; for the charges of a menagerie, 'eight horses, four camels, six ostriches, an ounce, a lion, eleven pair of birds, and eight hares from Fez'; a large sum to a Spaniard for his skill at cards, and for pastime therein; for a horse for the King's cook, so that he might be always at hand to make the royal soup; a subvention to Lodovico Alamanni to buy type to print his poems, help to certain Swiss scholars, salaries and rewards for the King's newly-established chairs of languages and mathematics; lastly, a continual drain of money to pay and feed the eighteen hundred artisans who for twelve years were employed on the grand buildings at Chambord. All this on a disordered and empty exchequer, which had been exhausted by every kind of mismanagement, and specially

[1] Goulart in Cimber et Danjou, Archives Curieuses, p. 374.
[2] Cimber et Danjou, ib. p. 79.

by the vast cost of the Piedmontese and Milanese garrisons, which had by this time been entirely swept away, so that the whole outlay on them was utterly wasted. For the good of the country there was nothing: if any of the aims of good government demanded money, there was but one reply—the purse is empty: if the King desired to secure any costly and unnecessary specimen of artistic taste and culture, the means could always be found. Thus, after Provence had suffered untold evils from the hand of Anne of Montmorenci, who had been ordered to ravage it lest the Imperialists should find sustenance there, the luckless Provençals, utterly ruined and helpless, could not obtain the remission of a single tax, nor a penny to help them in rebuilding their houses[1] or in restocking their land.

The condition of society may be seen by the affair of Lyons in 1529. The King sent orders that the city should complete the fortifications: the town was poor; how should the money be raised? The notables and artisans in convocation considered whether a tax should be laid on wine or on corn. Thereon 'Messire Campèse called Champier,' in a learned speech proved conclusively that free-trade in corn was far more essential to the welfare of the city than free-trade in wine, and it was agreed to tax the wine that came in. Hereon vinegrowers, innkeepers, and sots, 'good bibbers who haunted taverns more than churches,' having well drunk, rushed out, sacked Campèse's house and the houses of the chief corn-merchants, and threw the whole place into wild disorder. The rioters were not only earnest for wine but also abhorrers of images, and broke down the statues of Christ and the saints. It was with difficulty that quiet was at last restored. The Gargantua of Rabelais appeared in the very year in which this riot took place.

These evils were but symptoms of a general lawlessness: the vices of the Court spread far and wide: the clergy grew very corrupt and careless, or were touched with the new ideas in religion and became restless; the nobles, as we have seen, were

[1] Something was sent to Aix to help to rebuild the Palais de Justice there. That was all.

tainted by the example of Charles of Bourbon, and by the weakness of the central authority at this time: the people, in despair at famine, taxes, plagues, were reckless and indolent.

2. *The State of Feeling and Parties in France.*

During this period the King fluctuates between the new and the old: he sympathises with the intellectual movement of the time, and to some extent with the religious revival, while he hates and fears the 'King of Paris,' Beda, head of the Sorbonnist party. 'In 1522 in December, my son and I,' writes Louise of Savoy, 'by the grace of the Holy Spirit, began to know who were hypocrites, white, black, grey, smoky, and of every colour, from whom may God of His infinite clemency and bounty defend us; for if Christ be true, there is no more dangerous generation in all the world than these[1].' A singular entry by the hand of one whose whole influence for the remainder of her life (she died in 1531) was dedicated to the support of the stricter Catholic party. It is to be explained, even as the changes in the conduct of Francis are to be accounted for. Mother and son sympathised with letters against scholasticism, with Erasmus against the Monks, with the Biblicists against the Sorbonne. But they took no pleasure in the religious element of the Reformation, and were scared, as Frenchmen are wont to be, by the excesses of the extremer section. The Anabaptist troubles were the 'red spectre' which drew them back into the arms of the champions of order. The Anabaptists struck at kingship and at learning, as well as at the old religion; they committed great excesses; the interests, instincts, tastes, of the French Court were alike shocked; and men did not care to distinguish between those who pushed one side of the Reformation on to communism or to confusion, and those who honestly tried to harmonise religion with learning and human progress.

At this time the later French Protestantism of Calvin had not yet come up. The peasant war in Franconia, the Anabaptist

[1] Mémoires de Louise de Savoye, in the Collection Universelle, xvi. p. 434.

troubles, the popular onslaught from Germany on Lorraine in 1525, 1526, the disturbances in North Switzerland, the death of Zuingli on the battlefield of Kappel—these were the outward signs of the Reform-movement, as they displayed themselves to Francis. The Reformation of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had tried to discover the true relations between Faith and Reason, between St. Paul and Aristotle, and, appealing to a very narrow circle, failed to become a general or a national movement: the Reformation of our own age appears to have to deal with the apparently conflicting claims of Faith and Science, and is yet in the outset of its struggles; while the task of the Reformation of the sixteenth century was to reconcile Faith and Liberty, authority and discovery, obedience and enquiry. Now, in France there was throughout the age a middle-party, a school of politicians, both cultivated and intelligent, who for the most part set the religious question aside. They would introduce Learning to the Church, and make peace between letters and faith: they did not like the harsh cold worship (as they thought it) of the reformed conventicles; they enjoyed the artistic beauty and splendour of the older worship, and desired to unite it with scholarship and knowledge. We make a great mistake when we insist on dividing the people of those days into Catholic and Protestant. The divisions now so familiar then scarcely existed: the true distinction, for France at least, lay between the learned and the unlearned; and the French Court would certainly have rejoiced in a scholarlike toleration which might have united the nation. But for this there was needed less passion and more cultivation than the age was likely to see: and, in fact, the growing alarm and increasing strictness of the Catholic party soon made it impossible to find a common ground. From this failure in grasping the essential motives of the Reformation come many of the weaknesses of the reign of Francis; to this we owe the civil wars which rendered France powerless for the remainder of the century.

Thus Francis, as head of the Court-party, the party of the Renaissance, stood between the reforming movement and the

movement of reaction. To stand somewhat aloof from both, to play them against one another, to quiet them, to repress extremes, punishing overt acts of bad taste (such as the image-breaking in Paris and elsewhere), to rehearse, in a word, the part afterwards played by Catherine de' Medici—this was to be the King's work in France. Yet a bolder policy was possible, even tempting; but the difficulty was that Francis had neither faith nor firmness, without which no bold advance was possible. It was no doubt a hard position: if he sided too much with the Reformers, he endangered peace at home,—for France had no sympathy with the German movement; whereas, if he repressed them severely, he lost his hold on English good-will, on his North German friends, on the Swiss Reformers, whether of Zurich or of Geneva. With the inevitable fate of weakness, Francis both alienated his foreign friends and aroused discord and war at home.

On the one side of him were the high Catholics, supported, towards the end of her life, by Louise of Savoy, and led by Beda and the Sorbonne. Their 'secular arm' was Anne of Montmorency, the brutal devotee, the typical fanatic of ignorance and reaction; their supporter at the King's side Diana of Poitiers, who became the centre of the high Catholic party towards the close of the monarch's life. These again were backed by the good-will of the people, of that 'false democracy[1],'—the 'people' of the Sorbonne, a little later the 'people' of the League, then the 'people' of the Jesuits,—a democracy which, especially at Paris, showed itself throughout this period hostile to the better interests of France, and specially liable to be swayed by clerical and intolerant passions. The leaders of this party leant on Spain, and sought to draw nearer to Charles V.

On the other side stood Margaret, the King's sister, with her group of pleasant and learned men. The Du Bellays, statesmen, scholars and great nobles, who understood what France needed, to whom we owe so much of the light we get as to the history of this period, were warm supporters of her policy; we

[1] Michelet, Hist. de France, viii. 370 (ed. 1855).

find them at all the Protestant courts, at diets, at every place in which the anti-Spanish foreign policy of France might be advanced. Margaret was also supported by the influence of Anne, Duchess of Étampes, the King's mistress, 'the fairest of the learned, the most learned of the fair,' who, after her court days were over, reformed her life and died a devout Protestant. This group of intelligent and in the main patriotic persons desired to see France allied with Henry VIII, with the German Protestants, with the Pope sometimes, always with the Sultan; they had one ruling dread, the fear of the Emperor's supremacy. This party was split up into lesser sections; it embraced Margaret's own friends, who were mystical, pious, and anxious for reform by gentle means, by education and moral suasion; these were such as Briçonnet, Bishop of Meaux, and Lefèvre: it included also the humanists, the learned and somewhat rationalist scholars, who attracted the good-will and enjoyed the protection of Francis: it also embraced the Protestants, properly so called, men who, like Farel and Calvin, were destined to impress on Latin Protestantism its peculiar character. Behind all these were the zealots, the image-breakers, citizens with a thirst for martyrdom, fearless exponents of their one idea, the men whom one can respect, but who proved fatal to their party, and to the fortunes of reform in France. These sections were steadily, even with exercise of arbitrary power and violence, sheltered by Francis and Margaret from the vehemence of the Sorbonne, sometimes even snatched from its eager clutch. Legal authority, the bulk of the clergy, the Parliament of Paris, the people, all opposed the innovators, and sought to involve in one ruin the Renaissance with the Reform: Francis defending the one threw his protection also round the other. We must always remember that neither he nor Margaret was a Protestant. Zuingli might be welcome to dedicate to him his Confession, for Francis felt that the reformer and he had a common foe in Charles V; Calvin might address his 'Institution' to him[1], and the King be charmed by the pure and graceful Latinity of the

[1] In 1535.

French scholar: yet the King was not of them: though he wished them well, he would sacrifice them without hesitation, if his political aims seemed to demand it. When the recovery of his children from Madrid was seen to be contingent on his throwing himself into the hands of the party of Diana of Poitiers and Montmorency, he did not hesitate to turn his back on his sister, on reform, on toleration.

In 1528 three men, types of these three parties, were not improbably in Paris together—Loyola, Rabelais, Calvin. Their names alone suffice to show how vain must have been the thought that the Renaissance could ever become a middle term between reaction and reform.

3. *The Foreign Policy of the Kingdom.*

Closely connected with the fortunes of these parties was the foreign policy of the kingdom. France in 1530 was in the tight embrace of the Emperor's power. If we look round her borders we see on how many sides Charles could threaten her.

Navarre was, to a large extent, in his hands: then came the Spanish frontier to the sea: the Mediterranean, since the fatal defection of Andrea Doria, was a 'Spanish lake,' at least in its western waters. Then Charles had secured the chief Alpine passes which threaten Provence and Dauphiny, and had schemes against Geneva. The Duke of Savoy was his ally, laying France bare as far as to Lyons; Franche-Comté was his, Luxemburg also, and the border-lands of Hainault and Flanders. A glance at the map shows at once how much the independence of France was menaced. And how should she defend herself? First, and above all, by a fresh burst of national life, of such a heroism as common interests and common dangers could have well evoked in a warlike and high-spirited people, had they not been bewildered and divided by the uncertainties of royal policy and intrigue: next it was clear that all the nations which dreaded the Spanish-German power must seek the alliance of France, and look to her as the head of the resistance to universal monarchy. But in

this scattered outer circle, composed of England, Gelderland, Cleves, the German Protestant Princes, Geneva, Piedmont and the Milanese, the Papacy, Venice, and the Turk, the weakness arising from disunited geographical position and diverse political interests was intensified by the fact that Francis cared most for Italy, which could give little or no help, while his policy was complicated by a desire to win over the Papacy: for a time the Pope joined hands with the Protestants, an alliance which could not be sound: the brilliant career of Mahomet II and Ibrahim his vizir probably saved Europe from subjection to the Austro-Spanish power; yet Western Europe could not make cordial alliance with this Oriental and infidel prince. Consequently the policy of France was always liable to terrible fluctuations. In his hope of recovering Milan Francis let himself be deluded by Charles, and alienated his true friends, bartering away solid advantages for shadowy dreams. His whole policy was tortuous and faithless; thus at the moment when he declared that he was eager to fight the enemy of the Faith, he had a confidential agent in Soliman's court at Constantinople, who was actually making terms of alliance and mutual help with the Paynim: in 1531 he offered to occupy Italy for Charles V with fifty thousand men, so as to set the Emperor free to attack the Turk;—as if Charles was likely to acquiesce in a French occupation of the much-coveted lands for the mastery over which he had struggled, schemed, and fought.

4. *The Literary Aspect of the Age.*

These years are marked by a fresh outburst of literary and artistic power. The pleasant vein of Marot's verse, the weird humour of Rabelais, with its coarseness of expression, its astonishing common sense, its advanced opinions veiled under Pantagruel's mask, and the grave theology and political writings of Calvin, are all of this time; Budaeus, the learned Greek scholar, was 'the prodigy of France,' as Erasmus politely styles him. Yet the list is slight and meagre; the presence of the one

giant, the parent of Gargantua, the most original of French authors, alone redeems the literature from insignificance. The printing-press, nurtured by the fostering hand of Francis I, and managed by the rare ability of the two Estiennes, Henry and Robert[1], the latter an author of mark as well as a printer, teemed with learned works, and daily grew in power, until when Francis, in 1535, gave way before the Sorbonne, and issued an edict for the abolition of the Press, it was found impossible to put it into execution; the less severe measure of a Censorship was enacted in its stead.

Yet even in letters absolutism, in its interested alliance with the general movement of Renaissance, sought to substitute for the independence which learning had enjoyed within its own sphere a regulated system dependent on the royal will. If in one way the classical revival was a great advance on the scholasticism which had ruled supreme in earlier days, in another way it had a distinct tendency to bring in a new absolutist, or even an imperialist, series of ideas. This tendency is to be traced in the appointment at this time of Regius Professors[2]; who were royal nominees, imposed on the University of Paris at the King's bidding, expected to teach as he wished, and to replace the older and more independent machinery of the Regent-Masters, who hitherto had held the education of the University entirely in their own hands, unfettered save by the all-powerful bonds of ancient use. The new teachers, and their position as exponents of the new learning, made them the natural antagonists of the Sorbonne, which wrapped the University in its dark shadow, and forbade the light.

Francis fully recognised the value of Erasmus, and made every effort to get him to Paris, as the first President of his proposed College of the three languages. Erasmus, however, loved his ease and safety too much, and would not come. Nor indeed did the royal College prove much more than a great

[1] There were four 'Stephani' in all; but the second Henry and Charles belong to a later age.

[2] These Professors answer closely, in all respects, to the Regius Professors planted by Henry VIII at Oxford and Cambridge.

and beautiful dream. There were to be six Professors; but the King gave them no permanent footing, and built them neither lecture-rooms nor living-quarters. He talked of six hundred scholars; they were never gathered together. The proposal for a higher education was aimed at the dull scholasticism of the Sorbonne, and if persevered with might have done very much for France in this century; unfortunately, the King had not the vigour to carry out his own idea.

Art was more fortunate, and more ruinous to the state, which at this time needed not the luxuries but the necessaries of life. Much housebuilding of an elaborate kind went on; Italian architects and artists were sent for to plan and ornament these sumptuous palaces of royalty; they brought with them what was sensual in Raphael's school, and displayed it to the admiration of the French[1]; the native French school, represented by Jean Goujon the sculptor, and Jean Cousin the painter, was almost lost under the brilliancy of the Italian work, which flourished in the warm ripeness of decay.

From this whole review it is borne in on us that, while other nations felt the fresh promise of a new life, France was only amusing herself with the later influences of the Renaissance: there is a want of depth and seriousness; her King is heartless and faithless, the Court full of intrigue, the Church corrupt, the burghers wealthy, content to let things be, the poor folk fanatically or stupidly ignorant, according as they dwelt in town or country. During this age no States-General are convoked: the desire of the cities for some independence is rudely shaken; conventions of nominated nobles are called now and again; they represent nothing, save the royal will. The lawyers repress all freedom of thought wherever they can; the Sorbonne rules triumphant in the theological world; taxation is quite arbitrary, granted without any effort to connect with it the securing of political liberties, or, if refused, then levied by force: that resolute bargaining and constitutional progress which marked the growth of Parliamentary institutions

[1] As at Chambord, Saint-Germain, and specially Fontainebleau.

in England is utterly wanting in France; the connexion between taxation and representation is unknown, because representation has become unknown. The reasons which made the Reformation movement so slight and unsuccessful in France are all here; we will however defer their farther consideration for a while, and trace to the end the political struggle between Francis and Charles.

CHAPTER II.

The Second War between Francis I and Charles V. A.D. 1535–1538.

When Francis ratified the Peace of Cambrai, he did so with no thought of abiding by it longer than it suited him; at the time he protested that the peril of his sons, which was certainly real enough, was a kind of compulsion. When they were safe, the Dauphin having returned with enfeebled health[1], and the little Henry coming back dark and gloomy, a grave Spaniard rather than a gay Frenchman, the King eagerly looked out for excuses for war and the means of carrying it on. Both were close at hand.

In 1531 Louise, his mother, died, leaving in her coffers a million and a half crowns of gold, the fruits of long and pitiless exactions wrung from France. This vast sum the King at once seized, and never in all his life had he been so well off. With it he built palaces, reformed his army, got ready for war. Nor were external affairs unpromising. The Turks, who after Mohacz (1526) had established themselves in Hungary, had menaced Vienna in 1529, and were now eager again to attack the Austrian power; Henry VIII of England, pressing on his divorce-suit at Rome, was bitterly hostile to the Emperor, and ready for close alliance with France. Moreover, the great League of Smalkald, the union of the Princes against the Empire, of Protestantism against repression, had been formed in 1531, and was already stretching out friendly hands to Francis. Jean du Bellay the statesman, the friend and pro-

[1] Francis, the Dauphin, died in 1536.

tector of Rabelais, was sent to Germany to watch over French interests. Seeing things so threatening, the Emperor yielded, and referred the religious difficulty to the coming Council: Germany thereupon showed so bold a front on her eastern borderland that the Turks recoiled, and the combination against the Empire failed: failing only, however, to be renewed on the same lines three years later.

Francis, in fact, was not much in earnest at that moment; his political creed was scarcely defined: the rule 'Catholic at home, Protestant abroad[1],' which was hereafter to be the key of French policy under Henry IV and under Richelieu, as yet was hardly understood. The threat of separation from Rome which Francis made through his two Cardinals in 1532 was not very serious; he used it to frighten Clement away from an Austro-Spanish policy; for he wanted his help in carrying out his Milanese project. Clement, dreading the threatened Council far more than the King's suggestion of a schism, puzzled how to free himself from the divorce-complication, eager above all to advance his family by every means in his power, with one hand gave Catherine de' Medici[2] to France, and with the other tried to conciliate Charles by condemning Henry VIII. By the compact of Marseilles (A.D. 1533) he both raised high the credit of the Medici, and broke up the alliance between Francis and Henry of England.

The marriage of Henry, the King's second son, with Catherine de' Medici, which took place in 1533, brought many evils and no good to France. The promised dower of Catherine was never paid, the Italian cities she was to bring with her not being hers to bring; Clement died the next year, and Papal intrigues had to begin over again. The Protestants regarded the King's new alliance with suspicion, and connected it with his severities against the French reformers; his union with England was broken off.

[1] La Vallée, Histoire des Français, II. p. 338.

[2] Clement was not legitimate; Catherine is called his niece. She was daughter of Lorenzo II de' Medici, Duke of Urbino. At the time of her marriage she was but thirteen, and her boy-husband only fifteen.

At home, however, his power grew. The inexhaustible fertility of France gave him resources; his nobles were eager for fresh war; his mother's fortune still remained in part. He now reformed the war-power of the country, which, on paper at least, was very formidable. Not forgetful of his classical tastes, he ordained that seven 'Legions,' of six thousand men apiece[1], after the Roman pattern, should be levied: each legion to have a colonel, six captains of thousands, twelve lieutenants, twenty-four ensigns, and sixty 'centeniers,' or centurions. The local spirit was to be encouraged, each legion coming from a separate district: Normandy, Brittany, Picardy, Languedoc, Guienne, were to furnish each one; the Duchy of Burgundy, Champagne, and Nevers one; and the last was to be levied in Dauphiny, Provence, Lyons, and Auvergne. But this great scheme was never carried out. Some of the legions were not formed at all, the captains round the King preferring mercenaries to national troops. In the later wars of Francis the French themselves take comparatively small part. The service of this militia was soon commuted for a tax, calculated to support fifty thousand infantry, drawn from Germany or elsewhere; and the army continued to be composed in the old way of many bands of from three to four hundred men, each under a captain[2].

Excuses for war were easy to find. In 1533 one of the King's agents, Maraviglia, stationed at Milan, had been tried and beheaded, at the instigation, it was thought, of the Emperor. Francis at once protested, and prepared to attack the Duke of Milan. His Protestant friends in Germany, especially the Landgrave of Hesse, made a compact with him. They would attack Austria, while France fell on Italy; they would force Ferdinand to reinstate Ulrich, Duke of Wurtemberg. The Emperor was seriously alarmed: the Turks were ever

[1] In all 42,000, of whom 30,000 were to be pikemen, and the remainder arquebusiers.

[2] The name Regiment does not appear till later; the legion of Guienne when reformed in 1565 is called a Regiment; that of Dauphiny, Provence, &c. became in 1567 the 'Regiment de Dauphiné.'

dangerous in the east, and the Princes in the west, of Germany. He concluded the Peace of Kadan (1534), in which the Protestants won a great victory in the reinstatement of Duke Ulrich; secularised Church property was secured to the Princes; and in return Ferdinand was recognised by John Frederick Elector of Saxony, the head of the League, as King of the Romans. French subsidies had helped to bring about this result. This Peace is the first solid triumph won in Germany by the party of the Reformation. Lutheranism now spread rapidly from city to city, from state to state.

The Germans being thus bought off, Charles turned his attention to the Turks: he had for some time meditated a great blow at them, intending to cripple them on the Mediterranean, and thus to render their active junction with France a thing impossible. At this time, while Charles was master of the western portion of the great sea, Soliman was all-powerful in the eastern waters: roughly speaking, the long peninsula of Italy marked the bounds of their preponderance: Charles to the west of it, and Soliman to the east of it and up the Adriatic sea. But the younger Barbarossa[1], the seafaring rival of Andrea Doria, had succeeded his brother at Algiers, where he had a half-independent, half-corsair stronghold, a menace to Spain and Italy. He was under the protection of Soliman, and Admiral of all his fleets. His power grew. He fortified Algiers, took Tunis, and threatened the western supremacy of the Spanish and Genoese. A successful blow struck at him would secure the coasts of Italy, cripple Soliman, and paralyse the Milanese schemes of Francis. Wherefore Charles decided to take the step. First, however, the subtle Emperor, supported by the Pope, in order to put the French King in the wrong, summoned him to join this new crusade. Naturally Francis stood aloof, hoping that the expedition by failing might weaken his rival; he felt certain that at any rate it must exhaust the Emperor's narrow resources. The result did not answer to

[1] Khair-Eddyn, or Hareddin; the elder, Arondj, had perished fighting against the Spaniards in 1518.

his expectations: Charles speedily defeated Barbarossa, took Tunis, and rescued a whole host of Christian captives, with whom he sailed back triumphant, the champion of Christendom. The whole was achieved in two months and a half: half the Emperor's great task seemed to be accomplished; the other half was to be done twelve years later on the field of Mühlberg.

As a reply to this move of Charles, Francis and Soliman now for the first time made open alliance. The capitulations between them were first commercial (and these were made public), giving France many privileges and advantages in the Levant; and secondly political (which were kept secret), stipulating that Francis should attack the Milanese territory, while Soliman's fleets made a descent and diversion on the Neapolitan coasts.

Opportunely, just as Francis was beginning to fulfil his part of the contract, Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, died (Oct. 1535), and left no heir. Antonio Leyva at once entered the Milanese territory in force, and occupied it in the Emperor's name; for the fief had escheated to its over-lord. Thereon Francis, preluding with flimsy and frivolous claims, such as the rights of Louise of Savoy, which had been given up long ago, pushed his army forward into Piedmont, and hung like a thunder-cloud on the mountains over the Lombard plain. The Spaniards were very weak there, and with prompt vigour Francis might speedily have subdued the whole district. Instead of which, he acted with incredible weakness. He entrusted the keys of the Piedmontese territory, all-important for his scheme of war, not to one of his sure captains, but to a shifty Italian, the Marquis of Saluzzo, who soon sold them to the highest bidder. He also allowed the astute Charles to delude him with negociations: Milan was 'the apple dangled before the eyes of the big child[1],' who could not resist the bait: Charles, who was now at Naples, offered to give investiture of the Duchy to Charles Duke of Angoulême,

[1] Michelet, Histoire de France, viii. 388 (ed. 1855).

the King's third son, on condition that it should never be united to the Crown of France, that Francis should abandon his allies, leave Genoa free, and aid the Emperor against the Turks and Protestants. Francis replied, in effect, that he would willingly throw over his friends, if the Emperor would invest, not Charles his third son, but Henry his second. This was enough for the Emperor—he made delays, amused his rival, stopped the forward movement, and saved Milan: he gathered force, negociated with Henry of England, and came as far as Rome, thus drawing nearer to the scene of action.

And here he played a new and singular part; the curtain which conceals this dark statesman, this consummate actor, is lifted for a moment, and we see an explosion of long-pent-up scorn and anger, contempt and pride, which is splendid in its contrast to the studied moderation and humility of the Emperor's usual manner. Accompanied by the envoy of France, Velly, Bishop of Macon, and the ambassadors of Venice, Charles proceeded to the Consistory, where he quietly conversed with such Cardinals as were present. Paul III, informed of his visit, came down from his chamber, and the Pope and Emperor leant against the end of a bed in the room. Charles then told the Pope that he had something of weight to address to him, and that he wished to say it in presence of the Sacred College, and indeed in public. Thereon all present formed a semicircle round the foot of the bed; in the first line were the French envoys; behind them in an outer circle the Venetians and many other notable persons, ambassadors, prelates, dukes, counts and barons. Then the Emperor, his bonnet in his hand, began to speak in Spanish, pausing from time to time and dropping his head to read from a little slip of paper which he had wound round his finger[1]. His speech, so carefully prepared, so studiously arranged for effect, must have fallen on astonished ears. He began by alluding to his desire for a general Council; passing quickly thence he declared he had always wished to be friendly with the King of France, and still

[1] Du Bellay, Mémoires, Bk. V, Collect. Univ. xix. pp. 67–81.

desired that all differences might be arranged—but that he had ever found him so unreasonable a prince that he was compelled to describe all that had passed between them, and to lay it before the most august assemblage in Christendom. He then reviewed the past at length; referred to his own complicity with Francis in 1515, declared how Francis had taken advantage of him in every way, how he had opposed him in 1519, when the Empire was vacant; how they had fought at Pavia; how Francis had broken his solemn oaths of Madrid, had made a League in Italy against him, had been compelled to make the Ladies' Peace in 1529, had broken his word again, had allied himself to the Turk, had traitorously offered to garrison Italy with fifty thousand men, had fomented the troubles in Germany, and had helped the Landgrave of Hesse with money; that at the present time he was troubling Italy, and had intended to invade it, if the Tunis expedition had proved a failure; that he had claimed the Duchy of Milan, which he, Charles, had even consented to hand over to him on reasonable terms, to which the King, however, would not accede; and he added thereto other grievances to no small length. In conclusion Charles, to show his genuine love of peace, and to justify himself before God and man, and to prove that he was not so ambitious of universal empire as the French declared, said that he was willing to offer the King choice of three alternatives. First, the Duchy of Milan for one of the sons of France,—with exception of the Duke of Orleans,—on condition of a firm and durable peace being made, and of the King's help against heretics and infidels: or secondly, he offered single combat, on some island or some bridge or in a boat moored in stream, to be fought out with sword or dagger and in their shirts, if Francis wished it so; and this on condition that the victor should do his utmost to get the Council held, to extirpate heresy, to arrest the Turks; the Duchy of Milan on the one hand, the Duchy of Burgundy on the other, to be deposited as stakes: or thirdly and lastly, he offered war, regretfully, because he saw that the Turk alone would be the real gainer by it. If

the King chose this alternative, it should be war to the knife—and it should make one or the other prince the poorest gentleman in his country, and he prayed that this mishap might fall not on himself, but on the King of France. He added his grounds for believing that it would so fall out: right was on his side, Francis was the aggressor; the King's attack was reckless and the time ill-chosen; the Emperor's subjects were loyal and his captains tried, whereas those of France were such 'that were his like them, he would gladly tie his own hands and put the rope round his neck, and so go to beg mercy at his rival's feet.' Once more protesting that he longed for peace, the Emperor closed this long and startling speech.

After this public insult, Francis could only fight. And yet at the critical moment his resources failed, or his heart gave way, or his Turkish allies helped little: he withdrew his army, began to chaffer instead of boldly pushing on, and made no effort to hinder the Marquis of Saluzzo from handing over his strong places in Savoy to the Emperor: he at least could see clearly which prince was in the ascendent. By midsummer, 1536, the French had been swept out of Piedmont, the frontier defiles of Saluzzo and Nice lay bare; Charles, flushed with triumph, prepared to make a descent on Provence.

His wisest officers prayed him to forbear: Leyva, though crippled by the gout, was even carried to the Emperor's feet, that he might beseech him to desist. But he refused to listen; there were many who urged him on, and in July he crossed the Var. Montmorency, charged with the defence, refused to fight, or even to garrison and hold the critical passages, and fell back on the barbarous plan of destroying the country, so as to render it impossible for a hostile army to live there. Provence was scoured by royal troops, who burned and ruined farms, oliveyards, vineyards, villages, towns, even defenced cities. No bake-house or mill remained; hayricks and cornstacks were burnt, wine casks staved in, wells filled up with corn 'to corrupt the water.' No attempt was made to save anything; the stores collected in fortified towns, even in Aix the capital, perished.

The miserable inhabitants of that rich district saw with amazed eyes the inevitable famine, and the impending woes of hostile invasion[1]. It was many years before Provence recovered from her ruin. Thousands of industrious and innocent people were starved. At first, on the frontier, the army of Charles found sustenance enough in the hidden stores which in the hurry of swift destruction had been overlooked; the supplies, however, grew more and more precarious as the Germans and Spaniards pressed farther into Provence, where the desolation had not been so hurried: the lines of communication grew longer, the risks greater. Convoys from Toulon were often intercepted by the starving peasantry: the soldiers greedily devoured the unripe grapes and figs, and were carried off by dysentery: a quarter of the army was soon disabled. At Aix Charles wished to be crowned King of Arles and Provence, so reviving the old Imperial claims to those districts; but there was no man left to do it: in sullen gloom the clergy, Parliament, provincial nobles, had all withdrawn; there were no estates nor people to acclaim him as King, no archbishop to anoint and crown him. Charles had to abandon his intention, nor did it seem likely that he would gain any more substantial advantages from his inroad. An attempt on Marseilles failed; his convoys were pillaged; news came that disturbances in Liguria threatened his line of retreat; Leyva, his best captain, died of the epidemic raging in camp; Montmorency had seized Avignon, and had formed a strong entrenched camp between the Durance and the Rhone. There he collected all the mercenaries he could, Germans (or Swiss) against Germans[2], for both the royal and the Imperial army was drawn largely from Switzerland; and, with a hardness of heart worthy of the policy of Charles V of France, he sat in his lines and moodily contemplated the ruin of the fairest province of the realm.

[1] Du Bellay, Collect. Univ. xix. pp. 389, 390.

[2] Ibid. p. 364: 'Sa principale force gist aussi bien que la nostre en gens de langue Tudesque.' And again, p. 367: 'Vous avez les gens du pays si aguerris et si affectionnez au Prince, les Allemagnes voisines que je vous asseure estre de bonne volonté vers le Roy et le chemin si ouvert à y faire descendre Allemans et Suisses, que,' &c.

Montmorency had wellnigh sixteen thousand Swiss in camp; he was a sharp disciplinarian, and though his army was made up of different nations, sects, and opinions, such order was maintained that his lines were like a well-governed city rather than a newly-formed and heterogeneous camp of soldiers [1]. But whether he deemed his own military skill to be small [2], or thought that famine and the pest in his enemy's camp were his best friends, or whether he was already inclined towards that Spanish policy which he afterwards followed, we know not: certain it is that he made no aggressive movement, but stayed patiently in his lines, until at last the Emperor, weakened by want and suffering, hearing that the Dauphin Henry [3] had come down to Avignon, and that Francis was advancing southwards from Valence, abandoned his plans, and with a shattered army withdrew towards Italy. Even then the King's forces held back, and allowed him to pass unmolested through the perilous defiles of the Alps. Two months only had elapsed from the time when Charles had crossed the Var, flushed with his brilliant success in Africa; now with a ruined army and reputation dimmed, he recrossed that river, and, leaving his soldiers at Nice to guard the frontier, passed on to Genoa, whence, escorted by Doria, he set sail for Spain.

Hostilities, faint and indecisive, continued in Italy and on the Netherland frontier; it was a war without plan or point, and deserves no notice here. One incidental affair is of much higher importance, and had results affecting European life and opinions.

Geneva, surrounded by perplexities and difficulties not unlike those which beset France, had the heart to take a clear and decided course, while the great nation hard by wavered and could not tell its mind. In these years (1532–1535), helped on the one hand by refugees who had fled from the severities of Francis, and on the other by Francis himself, who promised his support—for with characteristic French policy he oppressed

[1] Du Bellay, Collect. Univ. xx. p. 5.
[2] As says Belcarius, l. xxi. p. 681.
[3] His elder brother, the Dauphin Francis, a young man of singular promise, had just died.

independent thought at home, while he encouraged it abroad—Geneva made a great effort, and threw off her allegiance to her Bishop, her subordination to the Duke of Savoy. In the movements of Swiss reform Zurich had been the centre of life from 1519 to 1526; from that date to about 1532 the heart of Swiss life was Bern; from this time onwards Geneva leads, and Swiss reform takes a more definitely Latin character.

In an unrivalled position, where Lake Leman pours its blue waters into the 'arrowy Rhone,' built in the angle between that river and the Arve, lies Geneva, with her small territory thrust westward, like a little wedge of land, into the dominions of the Duke of Savoy. Geneva was by this time Swiss in spirit, though not yet formally one of the Helvetic Republics. A short time back Geneva had been the head-quarters of the friends of Rome and the Papacy, and the very hive whence mercenaries had swarmed over into Italy: she was an eyesore to Savoy and France. We discern in her much of that international character which marks all Switzerland: her position between Italy and France at the south-west corner of the confederation corresponds to that of Basel between France and Germany at the north-west: like Basel, she kept her gates open, a refuge to the oppressed, and became a vantage-point whence the oppressed might issue forth with sword or pen to avenge themselves. At this time, somewhat like her neighbour Lyons at an earlier moment, Geneva was vexed with three jurisdictions: she had the Bishop and his chapter as her clerical lords, the Duke of Savoy with his officers as her lay lord; and the burghers in their civic offices as the people's representatives, claiming for their town the rights and privileges of a free Imperial city. In 1533 these last declared in favour of the Reform movement[1], and drove out the Bishop; they had ejected the Duke's agents some years earlier. Bishop and Duke now joined hands with the encircling squires, and in 1534 tried to recover lost ground and crush the citizens; but Bern and Fribourg, by way of a diversion, fell on the Pays de Vaud, which held of the Duke, and seized it; Lake Leman

[1] Finally and formally accepted in August 1535.

breathed a new air of independence. Francis, glad to embarrass the Duke of Savoy, sent two successive bands of mercenaries to the help of the city; but the Duke was vigilant and scattered them both before they could reach Geneva.

The three cities, Bern, Fribourg, Geneva, seeing that they must trust to themselves, next formed a solemn alliance, an 'Eidgenossenschaft,' as it was called; and from this word 'Eidgenossen,' 'Oath-comrades,' comes the famed party-title, Huguenot. This League was purely Republican; the outcome of it was a great civic republic, guided by the genius and fire of a Frenchman. John Calvin, a Picard of Noyon, who had begun life as a 'hot Papist,' and at Paris in his youth had listened with delight to the teachings of the Sorbonne, a few years later, at the age of twenty-five, in the days when Francis was bitterly persecuting the new opinions (1534, 1535), fled from France, first to Strasburg, then to Basel; there he published his 'Institutes of the Christian religion' in 1535, dedicating it to Francis I, and 'proclaiming therein,' as Guizot says, 'the grounds of the reformed faith, its rules of Church government, organisation, discipline, and its rights and duties in connexion with the state.' The book may seem stiff to us, and to have very little of a Republican tendency in it: only in one chapter, the last, is there any sketch of civil government; it deals throughout in a reverential spirit with the powers that be, and on its civil side (as also in dealing with episcopacy) does little more than touch on some of the more important and difficult problems of society: there is little of that democratic tone which we are wont in thought to associate with Latin Protestantism. For Calvin, in fact, heralds the second period of the Reformation; he was learned, skilled in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, apt to expound as a doctor rather than to appeal to the emotions like an enthusiast. 'He taught,' says Beza, 'not with affected eloquence, but with such deep knowledge, with so grave and solid a style, that all who heard him were ravished with admiration.' His was the thoughtful and measured manner of one who has to build up; and not the fire that purges or the storm-wind that sweeps away.

And in these years this thin grave Frenchman, with the logical precision and severity of his race, and with the utmost sincerity, laid down that strict and stern moral discipline, which gives to his career at Geneva a somewhat similar character to that of the far more striking career of the great Reformer of Florence, Savonarola. In the struggle of parties he was cast out of the city; yet his narrow vigour, grim fighting power, and fierce resistance, whether to Pope or Anabaptist or Arian, overbore all hostility, and he returned in 1541, to be thenceforward the virtual head of the new civic life, the representative of Genevan independence in Church and State. The work begun in south-western Switzerland by one Frenchman, Farel, was crowned and completed by another, Calvin; and Geneva stood firm on the edge of a hostile world, prepared alike for assault or for defence.

Meanwhile, far off, the repeated blows of Islam in the lands bordering the Danube were beginning to shatter the bulwarks of Christendom; the terrible battle of Essek (in November 1537) completely overthrew Ferdinand's army, and bared the eastern frontier. Charles, overwhelmed with many anxieties, accepted the mediation of Paul III; the Conference of Nice, at which the two monarchs did not themselves appear, took place, and a ten-years' truce was agreed to in 1538, on condition that each party should hold what it then held. France thus got temporary possession of the valuable Upper Rhone districts of Bresse and Bugey[1], together with the Alpine passes into Piedmont. It need hardly be added that the King cheerfully abandoned his more distant political alliances, and left his friends to shift for themselves. He even agreed to have a private and friendly meeting with Charles at Aigues Mortes, the 'Dead Waters' near the Rhone mouths, where the bases of a new and disastrous policy were laid. Francis fell entirely under the influence of the Emperor; the moderates in France, the Protestants in Germany, were left to take care of themselves.

[1] Bresse and Bugey did not become permanently French till 1601.

CHAPTER III.

THIRD WAR BETWEEN FRANCIS I AND CHARLES V.

A.D. 1538–1547.

FRANCIS and Charles were old men long before their time. It was observed when they met that they both stammered, both were sickly and failing. Yet in 1538 Francis was but 44, and Charles only 38. So heavy on them had been the burden of state cares; so ruinous their vices and faults. Francis after his fortieth year had changed much: he withdrew to his new palace of delights at Fontainebleau; there was his little Italy. As formerly, after his captivity in Spain, he had fitted up a luxurious house in the Vincennes wood, and had called it Madrid, thinking by contrast to heighten pleasure, or to wash away the painful recollections of the past, so later on at Fontainebleau he surrounded himself with Italian artists and learned men, to console himself somewhat for the failure of his schemes of ambition in the Peninsula. Thither also came French art and lent her aid; there was John du Bellay, his apologist-historian, and Rabelais with his new book just writ. In this retreat the King's old tastes had full sway, his love of art, of literature, of discovery, were gratified; there his earlier mistress, Anne of Estampes, still ruled, and with her the moderate party seemed likely to prevail.

But after Aigues Mortes all this was changed. Anne of Montmorency, now made Constable, as a reward for his grim work in Provence, gained great ascendency over the King's mind. Charles V also exercised amazing fascination on both the soldier and his master. There were in France at this time two almost hostile Courts—on the one side was the gloomy, strict Catholic party, headed by the Dauphin Henry, whose nature seemed to have taken a completely Spanish tinge, and supported by the

Constable whose fierce nature and dark religious fanaticism foreshadowed the more terrible side of the coming reaction[1], and by the elderly Diana of Poitiers, the Dauphin's mistress, both of whom seem now to have been the creatures of Spain: on the other side was the weary sickly King, with Anne of Estampes, and the young, bright, sparkling Catherine de' Medicis. These were the Spanish Court and the Italian Court. It is singular to notice how the grave young people shook the head at the light and frivolous old folk; the King was, as Michelet says, 'the mauvais sujet' of the Court: it was not now 'crabbed age and youth,' but gloomy solemn youth, with its vices—which were plentiful—duly, even discreetly, arranged, opposed to light and frivolous old age, which wore its heart on its sleeve, paraded its pleasures, was far from devout, consorted with laughing scholars, or reforming poets, or miscreant Turks and heretic princes. After Aigues Mortes, however, in 1538, Francis could resist the reactionary influences no longer, and gave in completely to the strict party. From this moment till the policy of Charles V showed itself too clearly to be mistaken, the Dauphin and Diana of Poitiers become all-powerful in France. The King was a mere wreck, ill, weak in body and mind. He agreed to everything: the old bait of Milan was once more successfully dangled before his eyes. He consented to abandon all his old friends: he surrendered his low German allies; Gelderland, Cleves, the Ghent burghers, all were sacrificed to Charles for the sake of the delusive prize so readily promised to the ear, so absolutely refused in fact.

The Emperor, if he could smile now at anything, must have laughed at the folly of his rival, who was so assiduous in destroying all his own strength. This gave Charles courage to travel through France in 1539–1540. He flaunted before the

[1] Brantôme tells us that 'Beware of the Constable's Paternosters' became a saying; for men noticed that as he mumbled through his religious offices he threw in, as interjections, or interjaculations, a few orders to his men, such as, 'Hang me this fellow,' or 'Tie that lad up,' or 'Run him through with your pikes,' or 'Fire that barn.' 'He was so conscientious,' Brantôme adds, 'that he always strove to combine the two duties.'

eyes of Europe his confidence in the King, thereby alienating from Francis all who hitherto had depended on him or wished him well. Henry VIII began secret negociations with the Emperor; the Flemings turned away from one who had deceived them; the German Protestants stood on their guard. The Sultan received a letter from Francis, urging him to make peace with Charles; in a dignified reply he declined to become a friend to his ancient foe.

No sooner had Charles passed safely into the Netherlands than he crushed the men of Ghent, and having played his game out successfully, dismissed the envoys whom Francis had sent after him to claim the investiture of Milan for his second son, the Duke of Orleans, with the cold statement that they had nothing to show written under his hand: all his promises were but lip-promises, not binding on an Emperor. Francis' eyes were suddenly and rudely opened; Montmorency had led him into this humiliation. The Constable had trusted all to the Imperial justice and friendship. It is amazing to see these full-grown men, steeped to the eyes in falsehood, behave like simple children, deceiving one another in the most innocent way, just as if they had no old experiences to guide and warn them.

The King's anger smote his ministers; Montmorency fell; the Duchess of Estampes barely saved Chabot, Admiral of France; the great lawyer, Poyet, the Chancellor, was tried and imprisoned, the whole Spanish party went down; and Francis once more stretched out his hands to his natural allies. But Charles satisfied the German Protestants: the solution of their difficulties was once more deferred 'to the meeting of a General Council,' and the Princes in return helped Ferdinand to stay the Turk in Hungary.

At the same time Charles determined once more to strike a great blow at the sea-power of the Turks. When Tunis fell, Algiers rose in its stead to be a menace to Christian ships and shores; and Charles sailed (in Oct. 1541) to reduce this infidel stronghold. In his earlier expedition against Tunis, he had likened himself to S. Louis, and had rejoiced to be, like him,

the champion of Christendom: this time he was destined to undergo fortunes almost as adverse as those which met the holy King on the African shores. No sooner had he landed than a fierce storm ruined his camp and fleet. The Turks attacked his half-starved army, and drove it back to the coast: nothing but the Emperor's coolness and courage saved the pitiable remnants of the expedition. The survivors got on board ship, and sailed for Europe: another gale caught them, and many vessels were lost. The Emperor landed, almost without a guard, at Carthagena: penniless, without an army or a fleet, with his high trust in his star shaken, Charles seemed to be almost hopelessly ruined; all Europe, half-frightened at the renewed danger from the Turks, half-relieved by the tottering of the Imperial power, stood astonished, to see what would follow.

Then broke out the third war between the rivals. Rincon, a subject of the Emperor, who had gone over to Francis, was employed as envoy to the Sultan. As he passed without a safe conduct (A.D. 1541) down the Po he was attacked and murdered by emissaries of the Governor of Milan. Francis filled Europe with his outcries against this attack on the 'law of nations,' and the sanctity of the Ambassador's person; and when fortune frowned on Charles, this pretext was enough to set the world ablaze. Soliman joyfully heard the call, and sent out his great fleet; alliances were renewed with some of the Protestant powers; five armies were set afoot. The head of the great family of the Guises, who had now come into prominence again, and whose children were destined to play a foremost part in all the troubles of the latter half of the century, was especially eager for war; his policy was now as hostile to Spain as that of his family afterwards was friendly to that power. Claude of Aumâle [1] had been ill-liked by Louise of Savoy, and

[1] **The Family of Lorraine-Guise.**

Gérard of Alsace was made Duke of Upper Lorraine in the Moselle territory by the Emperor Henry III in 1048. (To be distinguished from the Dukedom of Lower Lorraine or Brabant, created in 1106 by Henry V.)

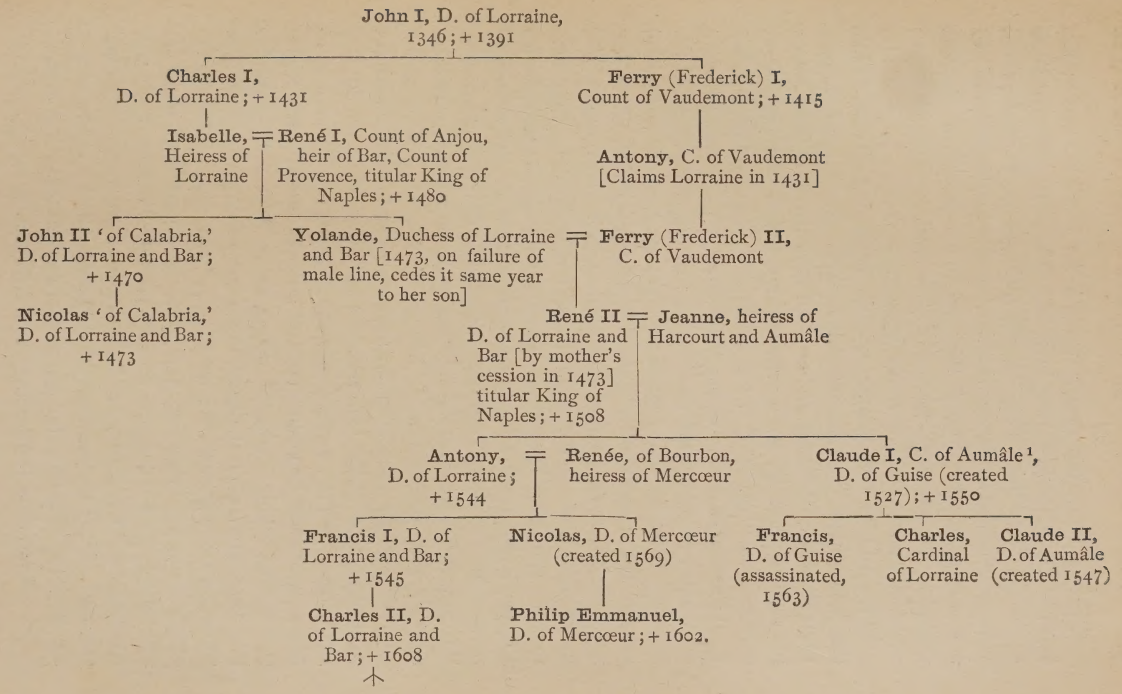
In 1346 John I became Duke; he left two sons, Charles, Duke in 1391, and Ferry (or Frederick) I, afterwards (1394) by marriage, Count of Vaudemont.

offended by her disapproval of his defence of Lorraine against the German peasantry in 1525; and though Francis made him Governor of Champagne and Duke of Guise in 1527, he remained in the shade, till the new exigencies of this third war and the overthrow of the Spanish faction at Court, made room for him. He was now sent with Charles, Duke of Orleans,—real soldier with royal prince, an arrangement so common and often so fatal in French warfare,—to attack Luxemburg, while the other armies alarmed other frontiers of Charles' dominions: one in Brabant, one in Flanders, another in the Piedmontese mountains, the last in Roussillon. Luxemburg was twice occupied and twice lost. Charles first subdued Cleves and secured his rear to the north; then he marched to recover Landrecies on the Sambre, which had been taken and fortified by the French, who had also occupied Artois. Francis came up, and all expected one more great battle between the rivals: it did not however come to blows, for Charles drew off quietly.

In the Mediterranean the Turks blockaded Nice by sea, the French besieged it by land. It was the Duke of Savoy's last stronghold. Though the town was taken by the French, the castle, perched on a steep rock, held out: and an Imperial army threatening them, the French, though they had promised in the capitulation not to harm the place, barbarously burnt the town and withdrew. The Turks wintered at Toulon, and in 1544 sailed with their booty to Constantinople. This was their last interference in the wars between Francis and Charles. The Duke of Alva defended Roussillon, and the Dauphin, who attacked it, was foiled.

From these two branches, which intermarried, came John II and Nicolas, Dukes of Lorraine, heads of the elder branch, who appear in the war of the Public Weal, and René II, Duke of Lorraine and Bar by cession of his mother Yolande. This René II was also titular King of Naples through his maternal grandfather René I of Anjou. René is the head of a fresh race of dukes, which leads on to Francis Stephen, husband of Maria-Theresa, and Emperor in 1745. From him sprang also Claude, ancestor of the Dukes of Guise, Aumâle, Elbœuf, and Harcourt. Claude was made Duke of Guise in 1527; he was a veteran of the earliest days of Francis, had fought brilliantly at Marignano (1515), had beaten the English at Hesdin (1522), and had repulsed the German peasants in 1525. In 1513 he had married Antoinette of Bourbon, great aunt of Henry IV.

TABLE V.


John I, D. of Lorraine, 1346; + 1391
Charles I, D. of Lorraine; + 1431
Ferry (Frederick) I, Count of Vaudemont; + 1415
Isabelle, Heiress of Lorraine
René I, Count of Anjou, heir of Bar, Count of Provence, titular King of Naples; + 1480
Antony, C. of Vaudemont [Claims Lorraine in 1431]
John II 'of Calabria,' D. of Lorraine and Bar; + 1470
Yolande, Duchess of Lorraine and Bar [1473, on failure of male line, cedes it same year to her son]
Ferry (Frederick) II, C. of Vaudemont
Nicolas 'of Calabria,' D. of Lorraine and Bar; + 1473
René II D. of Lorraine and Bar [by mother's cession in 1473] titular King of Naples; + 1508
Jeanne, heiress of Harcourt and Aumâle
Antony, D. of Lorraine; + 1544
Renée, of Bourbon, heiress of Mercœur
Claude I, C. of Aumâle [1], D. of Guise (created 1527); + 1550
Francis I, D. of Lorraine and Bar; + 1545
Nicolas, D. of Mercœur (created 1569)
Francis, D. of Guise (assassinated, 1563)
Charles, Cardinal of Lorraine
Claude II, D. of Aumâle (created 1547)
Charles II, D. of Lorraine and Bar; + 1608
Philip Emmanuel, D. of Mercœur; + 1602.

[1] For the House of Guise, *see* Table VI, p. 370.

The German Protestants trusted the King no more; the King of Denmark would not help 'the infidel's friend'; the King of England, finding that Francis and James V of Scotland were allied, in accordance with the hereditary friendship of the two countries, also joined the Emperor's party in Europe, declaring war against James of Scotland, and preparing to despatch an army into northern France.

Matters looked ill for Francis in the beginning of 1544. His foes grew in strength and number, while he had no friends beyond the borders of France. And even there he did not trust his own people: his war-power was composed of mercenaries, almost to a man. Swiss, Germans, even Danes and Swedes, filled the armies: it is reckoned that there were one hundred and twenty thousand men under arms; the captains despised the ill-drilled French, and gave them no credit for their undoubted bravery and natural gift of war. These mercenaries, while they undermined the true strength of France, were also costly, and the treasury was soon empty. All arbitrary expedients were tried to raise money: the King, without deigning to consult his Estates, levied taxes at his own pleasure, and France submitted to the double scourge of foreign troops and violent exactions. There were troubles on the western coast, where the gabelle of salt was very oppressive.

One brilliant though barren success gilds this third and last campaign of Francis' last war. The Count of Enghien was watching the Piedmontese frontier against the Governor of Milan, with little or no money, and orders not to fight. Blaise of Montluc, a young captain, whose Memoirs or Commentaries had afterwards so great repute that Henry IV used to call them 'The Soldier's Bible,' tells us how he was sent to Francis to extort from him leave to fight, and how he gained his point against all the old captains round the King [1]. The result was the battle of Cerisolles, in which the French mercenaries and Gascons, led by the brilliant young nobles of the court, routed the Imperialists: Italy lay open before the victors. But Francis

[1] Mémoires de Montluc, Collect. Univ. xxii. d. 245 sqq.

was old and cautious; Enghien was not supported with either money or men, and was ordered not to advance. The victory, which might have had decisive results, was barren. In fact, the danger in the north was so pressing that every nerve would have to be strained to keep Charles and Henry from joining forces under the walls of Paris: so great and perilous a diversion was too much risk in the face of the armies gathering on the frontiers of Picardy and Champagne. Still, the prospects of success in Italy must have been tempting: the whole Peninsula hated the German yoke; Venice was openly friendly to France: the Pope, angry at seeing Charles and Henry in union, leant to the same side.

Charles and Henry consented to neglect the fortified places along their line of march, and to penetrate, Germans and Spaniards from Lorraine through Champagne, English and Netherlanders through Picardy, straight to Paris. The country was almost undefended: the few French troops that were on that side were scattered among the towns: a swift forward movement might have brought sudden success, the fall of Paris, the possible overthrow of Francis. But Charles and Henry did not fully trust one another: and instead of fulfilling his promise, the English King turned aside to besiege Boulogne, a town very useful to him for the private interests of England, as men thought them; it was an infraction of the compact with Charles. In like manner the Imperial army, penetrating into France, had tarried to besiege Saint Dizier; it found, as usual, the obstacles formidable, the supplies scanty; the force melted away as it advanced. Still the Emperor pressed on, took Épernay and Château Thierry: the Dauphin fell back to Meaux, and Paris was seized with panic. But Charles saw his army dwindle day by day: he was wanted in Germany, for the Turk was moving and the Protestants were discontented; Henry VIII seemed intent on his own interests, and was not trusted; and consequently, to the great relief of Francis, who was almost in despair, Charles sent from Crespy terms of peace, without consulting or informing Henry of England; the French King,

thoroughly weary of war, accepted them eagerly. Peace was signed in September 1544; Boulogne had capitulated to Henry just four days before. The English King, not unjustly angered, refused to make terms, and continued a desultory warfare in Picardy for two years longer.

The Peace of Crespy[1], which closes the wars between the two great rivals, without in the least settling the large questions which underlay their personal conflict, is notable as showing that all the misery inflicted on France during the whole period, all the mismanagement and unheroic conduct of her chiefs, all the vast powers of Charles and his allies, were unable to quench the vitality of the central kingdom of Europe, or to wrest from her a single province. The one great lesson France should have learnt from this attempt to set up a kind of balance of power was that she was stronger at home than abroad: that her position, her resources, even her national characteristics, lent themselves best to defence; and that the true prosperity and growth of France ought to begin by good government and greater compactness at home. These things were understood by Richelieu; and it was by strict autocratic consolidation, enabling the King to strike outward from a safe centre, that France became so formidable to Europe in the days of Louis XIV.

The terms of the Peace of Crespy seemed to aim at an equilibrium and settlement of differences; whereas, in fact, the interests of one party only in France were considered. It was deemed a triumph of the 'white faction'; for it secured a fine position for Charles of Orleans, to the detriment of the Dauphin Henry. The Emperor doubtless reckoned on the importance of maintaining the two French factions in almost equal strength, and thought that on the King's death Charles of Orleans would need some safe shelter. Francis gave up his rights of feudal sovereignty over Flanders and Artois; the Emperor in return abandoning his claim to the Duchy of Burgundy. These acts may be regarded as balancing one another. The Italian questions were not so simple. Here,

[1] Crespy is Crespy Couvrant near Laon, not Crépé in Valois.

however, it was agreed that Francis for his part should throw up all claims on Naples, while Charles promised the hand of one of the Imperial princesses to Charles Duke of Orleans, with the Duchy of Milan as her dowry. When the Duke died in 1545 of war-fever, Charles V, holding that the clause was thereby rendered void, invested his son Philip with Milan, and refused to listen to the renewed claims of Francis.

Thus France lost all hold on Italy, and never regained it till the days of Napoleon. It was no doubt a political defeat; yet we may well ask with Heeren, 'whether any nation ever drew any profit from its foreign possessions, however convenient they may have been to its rulers[1]?'

Henry VIII, seeing that the Emperor's ambition grew with his strength, and sore at the treatment he had received, finally made peace with Francis in June, 1546.

All through that autumn the two kings made preparations for an apparently inevitable war against the threatened universal monarchy of Charles; they desired to succour the Smalkald League in its struggle against the Catholic party, and to join in defending the independence of the German Princes. Francis once more made the round of Europe; his agents found hearty welcome at Rome, where the fortunes of the Protestant Elector of Saxony were a matter of deep and friendly concern to the Pope. The Sultan must have smiled to hear of another combination to be formed. Venice was ready to bear her part for the sake of her Eastern connexions and the freedom of the Mediterranean.

But death was busy in these days: the year before he had taken from the scene of his struggles and triumphs the manly and humorous Luther; now, in the beginning of 1547, he carried off the English King, who left his country to a weak child; two months later he laid his hands on Francis. Charles stood alone on the field thus cleared, and the years of his highest successes were at hand. Francis was only fifty-three years of age, but he was old and decrepit long before his death. His court had been

[1] Political System, p. 37, Eng. ed.

a scene of immoral intrigues, of plans half-carried out, of power in utterly irresponsible hands, of generals appointed by corrupt interests, of splendid but decaying art, of some literary brilliancy. He was not devoid of high aspirations, knowing what was noble and good, while he too often did what was base. His title to the gratitude of posterity is but slight. He protected the Protestants where he could; he resisted the march of the Austro-Spanish power. He missed his opportunity and failed to lead the more modern movements of intellectual and religious life in Europe; for his vices and pleasures ever clung about his neck and drew him back. If he understood his true policy, he followed it only fitfully and feebly. Perhaps his most enduring characteristic was good-nature and kindliness, of which there are very many examples, in matters large and small, throughout his life. 'He loved to do a favour, and to see men leave his presence with a lightened countenance[1].' He had brilliant virtues, no doubt; these, however, were counterbalanced by very ruinous vices, and even his virtues leaned to the side of fault. Still, in spite of all his failings, his people loved him, for he fairly represented their nature and qualities. They sympathised with his main aim, the upholding of the dignity and power of his kingly crown. For this they bore much with him; his faults were theirs, his triumphs theirs. We feel, when we look at his reign, that the unity of the kingdom is assured. We feel, too, that it is the unity of subjects under an absolute prince, and that, both in strength and weakness, this is the destiny of the French monarchy. There is before us not a free and high-spirited nation, lifting their leader high among the princes of the world, but a people caring little for their own constitutional life, much for position in Europe, and therefore drawing inevitably towards a military monarchy, to great glories in war, and at last to a dictatorship and an Imperial age.

[1] L. von Ranke, Französische Geschichte, i. p. 93 (ed. 1868).

CHAPTER IV.

Henry II and the Close of the Age of Italian Wars. A.D. 1547–1559.

On the death of Francis a great crowd of learned and intelligent men, estimated by some at five thousand in number, took flight from Paris; the fact bears high testimony to the better side of the character of that unstable King. He had been humane, and even sympathetic; when he was gone there was no man left in France to protect them. As we watch these families escaping for their lives, we become aware that the King must have been far more in earnest than we are wont to allow; and that, though weak and wavering in many ways, he ever retained his attachment to letters and the learned; and yet in his last days he allowed the Sorbonne to destroy Estienne Dolet, the most prominent scholar of France. We come to feel also how strong were the antagonist forces against which he had to struggle, and how difficult, indeed all but hopeless, his task. A feeling that there must have been at least one noble element in his character steals over us; we let one flower of gratitude and recognition fall lightly on his tomb.

The exiles all turned their faces towards Geneva. In the former flight, when the King's weakness had allowed the persecutions of 1535, the refugees had gone to Basel, and had come into close relations with the German reformers and students. Now, however, Basel was no longer their head-quarters; the German influences were weak, while those of Switzerland had

grown strong. 'They founded,' says Michelet[1], 'the true Geneva, that marvellous asylum placed in the very midst of three nations. Without territory or army, she made up by intellect and spirit for what was wanting in space, or time, or matter:—Geneva is a city of the mind, built by Stoicism on the rock of Predestination.' The city became the centre of resistance to the Catholic reaction: her citizens were heroes or martyrs, her theology as hard as steel, fit weapon to combat the Inquisition or the Tridentine decrees; her schools became the best in Europe; 'within that narrow close, that gloomy garden of God, the martyrs of the second age of the Reformation bloomed like blood-tipped roses under the fostering hand of Calvin[2].' If Soliman the Turk saved Luther and the liberties of Germany, Geneva in her turn defended the rights of the human mind in Western Europe. This was indirectly due to Francis I; and it may be said that, in the long series of predisposing causes, he set in motion those powers which in the end led on to the French Revolution and the overthrow of the monarchy.

Henry II and the 'black court' scarcely cared to dissemble their joy when the King was borne to his last resting-place. The elderly Diana of Poitiers, and Montmorency, Francis Duke of Lorraine, and Charles Cardinal of Lorraine, together with the Marshal S. André, formed the King's party, which was now all-powerful in France. One after another the heads of the opposite side had perished, not without suspicion of foul play[3]. Charles of Orleans had died in 1545, saying to Tavannes with his last breath, 'My friend, I am a dead man: all our plans are broken;' and Tavannes, in recording the circumstance, adds that 'just as Charles of Orleans was about to step into a great fortune, he slipped instead into the tomb;' . . . 'my labour, time, and hopes,' he says, 'all perished with him[4].' Enghien, their most promising leader, was killed, by an intentional accident, in 1546; every obstacle to the power of Henry and his gloomy friends was

[1] Histoire de France, viii. p. 483 (ed. 1855).
[2] Michelet, ibid. p. 484.
[3] Martin, Histoire des François, viii. p. 347 (ed. 1857).
[4] Mémoires de Gaspard de Tavannes, Collect. Univ. xxvi. p. 78.

swept away. Those of the late King's ministers and favourites, who had not perished, were displaced. The Chancellor Olivier, Annebaud the Admiral, the Cardinal of Tournon, all fell; the lately ruling mistress, Anne, Duchess of Étampes, was obliged to hand over the jewels of the late King to Diana of Poitiers, Duchess of Valentinois.

First, the sickly monarch with his Italian spouse, Catherine de' Medici; then their ill-conditioned half-crazy children, ruled now by their clever and unprincipled mother, now guided against her will by the party of reaction, govern France, if government it can be called, for nearly half a century. It is an age of political ruins, of desolating and obscure civil warfare, of false intrigues, of lost influence abroad and weakened rule at home. The germ of all these troubles lay in the 'King's party' of Henry II, and in his reactionary tendencies. The Constable of France, Montmorency, a harsh and imperious noble, left to the Guises only a shadow of authority, and they bitterly resented it. We hear in their murmurings the first whispers of that hollow wind which was the harbinger to the fierce storms of the Civil Wars.

Yet, so strong are the general tendencies of resistance to the universal empire of Charles V, that this indolent and gloomy King, apparently so much under Spanish influences, and in principles and views so like the Emperor, is the Prince who inflicts on Charles far heavier blows than Francis ever struck, and who laid the foundations of that advance towards the north-east which went on unchecked till Louis XIV secured the Rhine frontier from near Basel to below Strasburg. For the first time, under Henry II, France became aware that she had a real frontier on that side; the three Bishoprics secured her a shelter for Champagne, an entrance into Lorraine, and the command, through Metz, of the line of the Moselle.

Tavannes, who first went with Charles of Orleans, and on his death attached himself to Catherine de' Medici; who afterwards became a vehement Catholic, and one of the founders of that mischievous Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit which fore-

shadowed the League; who also was a chief actor in the massacre of S. Bartholomew's Day [1];—has left us, and no one had more experience, a very dark picture of the factions at Court during this reign. How bitter he is against the rule of women, and with what good cause:—'The Salic Law, which excludes women from the throne, ought to remove them also from the government. Vengeance, anger, love, constancy, fickleness, impatience; these make them unfit to handle state affairs: they turn out the brave to make room for the handsome . . . . as if a battle-field were a ball-room [2].' These women, he goes on, ruined Francis I, 'for they like a thousand crowns in their pocket better than a province in the King's hand.' Henry II, he adds, 'had the same faults as his predecessor, with a weaker mind;' and it may be called 'the reign of the Constable (Montmorency), of Madame of Valentinois (Diana of Poitiers), and of the Duke of Guise, not his own reign.' Two families, says Tavannes, that of Montmorency and that of Guise, divided between them all honours and all commands [3], the King being a mere 'partisan of these two houses.' On the one house were accumulated the offices of Constable, of Grand Master of France, of Admiral, a Colonelship of infantry (one of the great commands of the 'Legions'), the governments of Guienne, of Languedoc, of the Isle of France, of Provence, the Captainships of the Bastille, of Vincennes, of Boulogne, and thirty companies of gens d'armes held by friends of the House. On the other side the Guises had in their hands the governments of Burgundy and Champagne, the Generalship of the Galleys, Colonelship of the light cavalry,

[1] The Mémoires of Gaspard of Tavannes are not strictly speaking contemporary records; they were compiled apparently by John of Saulx, Viscount of Tavannes, his second son. Still they have the colouring of the age; their quick trenchant style, caustic tone, insight into party life, make them very valuable records, in spite of their frightful inaccuracy.

[2] Tavannes, Collect. Univ. xxvi. p. 10. Poor Tavannes, whose soreness here comes out, attached himself, as he tells us, to the King, not to the ladies, and was rewarded by them, as any foolish fellow who will not be a party-man may expect to be, by neglect and wrong. Besides, he was a hard-hitter and ugly.

[3] Tavannes, ibid. p. 89.

many lieutenancies, and twenty companies of gens d'armes. Everything was given to or through these Houses; the King was entirely in their hands and afraid of them. 'Those,' says another, 'who possessed him'—like a piece of goods—'were of great effrontery, and greedily desirous of enriching their houses; nothing escaped them; like swallows catching flies, they swallowed any dignity in the state, bishopric, abbey, office, or other titbit that came by[1]'. And the government of the country was so bad that the King seemed to have conspired with them to divide France among them, to the ruin of his children and of his kingdom; he prepared the way for those terrible disturbances which soon after afflicted the country. The money gathered by Francis for a German war was all recklessly squandered. Henry soon plunged deep into debt.

One may judge how high party-spirit ran by the proposal which Tavannes made to Catherine de' Medici, when, a little after this time, she complained of the great power of Diana of Poitiers, who was the real King of France. He offered to go and cut her nose off, which would doubtless have considerably reduced her influence. The Queen thanked him, but deemed the proposal hardly wise; she was grateful to Tavannes, who had professed that he would gladly perish if he could 'extinguish vice, and the misfortune of the King and France'; yet she thought it well to take patience, and wait[2]. A few years later she was rewarded for her long-suffering, when her son succeeded to the throne, and her all-powerful rival was obliged to retire. Then began the days of her political power, days which, though they brought some triumphs to her ambitious spirit, gave her little happiness or real success.

The young King 'was well-favoured in body and mind; of excellent height and proportions; robust, strong, gay at exercise, of which he was really fond . . . his manners were so affable and humane that at first sight he stormed men's hearts

[1] So says Vieilleville, Collect. Univ. xxix. p. 3. The whole passage is a terrible picture of mismanagement.

[2] Tavannes, Collect. Univ. xxvi. p. 151. She is said to have lived on terms of intimacy and friendship with her elderly rival.

and won their devotion[1] . . . he was accomplished, wrote music to a favourite psalm of Marot, and for a while seemed inclined, as did Catherine also, to favour the Huguenot literature, if not the party itself: . . . he spared his people, when it was not too much trouble to do so.' After the battle of S. Quentin there was made a doggrel distich. 'The People spares King Henry, but curses Anne (of Montmorency): Diana it hates, and yet more the Guises[2].'

There grew up, by custom, not by any edict or enactment, a new Council, called 'Les affaires du Matin,' the 'morning's business': a definite body of the King's friends, very exclusive, and absolutely irresponsible, who waited on him every morning. When he woke the proper officer brought him his shirt: then the nobles of the Court trooped into the room to salute their monarch. He rose, and before them all knelt at a faldstool and prayed; after which all withdrew except 'those of business,' the privy council. This use long continued in France; it was in full operation under Louis XIV, and is described by the witty and malicious pen of S. Simon.

One important fact marks the opening of this reign. Brittany, which for more than half a century had been connected by marriages with the Crown, now at last became an integral portion of the kingdom. In 1547 the Duchy was finally united to France, 'with the same laws, with magistrates, royal not ducal, with a royal Parliament established by ordinance of Henry II, who altogether abolished the very title of Duke of Brittany[3].'

[1] Cimber et Danjou, I. iii. p. 279.

[2] Ibid. p. 280.

'Henrico parcit populus, maledicit at Annae,
Dianam odit, sed mage Guisiadas.'

[3] Francis II of Brittany dying in 1488 left the Duchy to his only daughter, Anne. She married, first Charles VIII, then Louis XII; and in both cases carefully secured the independent life of the Duchy. Anne and Louis XII had a daughter, Claude, who married Francis of Angoulême (1514), bringing him as dower the Duchy of Brittany, and the counties of Blois, Coucy, Montfort, Étampes, and Ast. She was a plain but excellent woman. She did not secure the independence of her Duchy: on her death the Dauphin Francis inherited it; when he died (1536) it passed to his brother Henry;

At first the kingdom had peace; though Paul III pressed Henry to resist the predominance of Charles, who, since Mühlberg (1547), had become all-powerful, the King would not move. He also won a political triumph over England. Somerset, the Protector, wishing to secure the hand of Mary Queen of Scots for the young King Edward VI, then only five years of age, had marched an army northwards, and defeated the Scots at Pinkey (Sept. 1547). In opposition to this rough way of wooing the young beauty, the French also came as suitors, sending a force to support Mary of Guise, the Regent, her mother, against the English. By help of these troops, and with the good-will of the Regent, Mary of Scots was safely carried over into France, to the great delight and triumph of Henry II. He bade his envoy in London go to the Protector, and tell him that the little Queen was affianced to Francis the Dauphin, and that Scotland, sceptre and crown, had been handed over to him, Henry, for his son's profit; wherefore he held himself bound, by duty and obligation, to protect that kingdom as though it were his own[1]. This was not a declaration of war, though it came very near to it: it was a distinct daring of England to interfere with Scotland; it was saying that the Calvinistic party there must hope for nothing; that the English Calvinists had failed to win the day, and that the high Catholic party, carrying off the Queen, had secured Scotland also to the faith. So they thought, and, for a while, their policy seemed to prosper; but the Scottish people were too stubborn and too much in earnest to be ruled in this manner; and Mary of Scots, entangled from her childhood in these intricate matters, was destined to pass her life amid intrigues, the sport of other interests than her own, and at last to perish, because it was impossible for her to reconcile her claims and those of the Catholic party with the wishes of England and the safety of England's Queen.

War all but broke out at once between England and France:

and when Henry succeeded to the throne in 1547 the Duchy finally lost its independence.

[1] Tavannes, Collect. Univ. xxvi. p. 210.

a French army threatening Boulogne. But the Scots being beaten, Henry, who disliked war, soon came to terms with Edward's government; he recovered Boulogne on payment of a sum of money, and persuaded the English to consent to peace with Scotland (March 1550). The King, occupied with his pleasures, with these affairs, with an attempt to put a stop to religious movements, and with the salt-tax revolt, which once more broke out in connexion with the Calvinist agitation in South-western France, was unprepared to cope with the power of Charles during these years. All seemed, in fact, to go as the great Emperor wished; a new Pope, Julius III, a weak and unworthy creature of the Imperial party, agreed to resummon the Council of Trent; and it looked as if Charles were about at last to grasp the fruit of all his toil and all his statecraft. The day of Mühlberg had crushed the Smalkaldic Princes; England was in the hands of a weak boy; the Pope was favourable, the Turk at peace; in his own territories all resistance seemed at an end; France had her hands full, and was feeble, with no strong man in command; finally, the Council seemed about to settle the religious question, to restore the unity of the Church, and to display the universal monarchy blessed by a once more universal Church. On the one side the Emperor hoped to secure the hereditary succession to his vast possessions for his son Philip: on the other to secure himself by curbing all freedom of opinion or action. But his brother, Ferdinand of Austria, refused to abandon his position as King of the Romans in favour of Philip; the Smalkaldic League was revived; Moritz of Saxony secretly drew towards the Princes. Hitherto that remarkable young man had been a lukewarm and moderate Protestant, who set the aims of his keen ambition above those of his religion or his order. Now that by attaching himself to the Emperor he had obtained the Electorate of Saxony and the Administration of Magdeburg and Halberstadt, he felt that the Emperor's party could give him no more, while he saw that the Imperial policy aimed at diminishing, if not entirely abolishing, the liberties of the German princes. Accordingly, through

having become, by the Emperor's gift, a great Prince of the Empire, his interests were now in antagonism with those of his benefactor. And consequently, as before he betrayed his brethren the Germans, so now he betrayed his friend and master, who trusted him. He found all Germany alarmed and profoundly suspicious of the Emperor; Princes and cities alike in a ferment; both because of the Spanish troops, which, contrary to his oath at election, Charles had brought into Germany, and because all dreaded a Spanish King of the Romans, if Charles succeeded in dispossessing Ferdinand for Philip's sake. Moreover, the Emperor had used severities against the German mercenaries, regarding them as Lutherans, and as therefore likely to interfere with his plans. Abroad too the conjuncture of affairs grew adverse to the Emperor. While Luther lived the combination of the Lutheran Princes with foreign powers had been disliked, and almost impossible: now that he was dead, and his patriotic voice hushed, the Princes did not fear to call on Henry of France for help; the Turk was also summoned: the old lines of politics reappear. England and France had also made peace: for when Charles had threatened to coerce the weak government of England—he would declare war, he said, unless the Princess Mary were allowed to hear mass[1]—what was more natural than that England should join the one power which appeared still able to rival the Emperor? This Anglo-French alliance made it possible and natural for Henry II to listen to the overtures of the German Princes: a League was formed at Chambord early in 1552, and Henry, promising the Princes a monthly subsidy of sixty thousand crowns, agreed to make a strong diversion into Lorraine.

The price by which he was tempted was heavy: he was to have in his hands, as Imperial Vicar, the cities of Metz, Verdun, and Toul[2], the 'Three Bishoprics,' together with a protectorate over the Spiritual Princes. For the Princes feared lest Charles should seize on these towns, to the farther imperilling of their

[1] Ranke, Deutsche Geschichte, v. p. 121, note.
[2] These cities, feudally Germanic, were French-speaking.

liberties[1]. The movement of circumstances thus proved too strong for Henry II, who, brave as he was, shrank from war, and loved his ease; he was plunged into a struggle which might be for life and death; a vehement Catholic, and inclined to what we may call a Spanish policy, he found himself opposed to the great Catholic-Spanish power, and against himself the successor to his father's schemes. The influence of the Guises, and of Vieilleville, captain and politician[2], prevailed not only over that of Montmorency, who was averse to the German alliance, but even over the King's wish for peace. It was perfectly clear that, if France were strengthened on her North-eastern frontier, their interests, which lay on that border, would gain by the war. We find in more than one Memoir of the time the sketch of a French Rhine-protectorate. 'The King should have occupied the plain of Alsace, and fortified the Rhine-frontiers, as protector, without farther irritating Germany, should have contented himself with the Duchy of Lorraine, recompensing the Duke in Anjou, should have built an impregnable fortress in the mountains at Saverne, or on the Rhine, and bounded his kingdom by Metz and by the Black Forest (?): this would have re-established the old kingdom of Austrasia, as an adjunct of France[3].'

Early in 1552 the German army under Moritz of Saxony broke up from Magdeburg, where he had been nursing it since the friendly capitulation of the town, and marched for Augsburg. The Emperor lay at Innspruck, whence he could supervise the proceedings of the Council at Trent, while he also watched

[1] At least so says Vieilleville, Collect. Univ. xxix. p. 296. 'The Emperor has taken the Imperial towns of Cambrai, Utrecht, and Liège, to the great detriment of all Germany; and the Princes-Electors have discovered that he aims at doing as much with the Imperial cities of Metz, Strasburg, Toul, and Verdun, and other Rhine towns, which would be utter ruin to the Empire.'

[2] Vieilleville's Memoirs are perhaps absurd, but they are infinitely amusing; lively, self-satisfied, and garrulous, he gives us pictures of many men and many lands. They were edited, perhaps thrown into their present form, by Vincent Carloix, Vieilleville's secretary.

[3] This is from the Commentator on Tavannes' Memoirs, Collect. Univ. xxvi. p. 217; so also Vieilleville expresses himself in his Memoirs (Collect. Univ. xxx. p. 89).

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what went on in Germany and Italy. He refused to believe that Moritz was playing him false: he was absolutely defenceless and unprepared, and remained quiet at Innspruck till the Princes were almost on him; then at last he fled; the Interim, so great a grievance to the Protestants, came to an end; the Council vanished hastily from Trent, one Bishop dying of fright and flight; and the agreement of Passau (1552) destroyed for ever the Emperor's great schemes, by establishing the Lutherans on a footing of equality with the Catholics in Germany.

While these things were being enacted there, Henry II gathered a large army: 'there was no good town in which the drums were not heard, for the levy of foot soldiers;' lads bade farewell to father and mother, shops were shut up, so great was the eagerness of all to make this journey, and to see the Rhine[1]. Henry marched through Champagne, proclaiming himself protector of the liberties of Germany; the regency was given to Catherine de' Medici. Montmorency, who had been sent before with the bulk of the army, had already won the critical city of Metz, half by cajolery, half by deceit[2]. Before the King made entry, he reviewed all his army in the plain: there were fifteen thousand men of the French bands, nine thousand Landsknechts, seven thousand Swiss, sixteen hundred and fifty lances, about three thousand light horse, a thousand mounted arquebus-men, two thousand men of the arrière-ban, six Scottish bands and one English company, the King's household troops, his two hundred gentlemen and four hundred archers of his guard, together with a great crowd of nobles, who served as volunteers[3]. It was a great but motley force, and one which fairly expresses the nature of the opposition to Charles: it may be also noted that the number of Frenchmen in the field once more is large. After the review, Henry entered the city in

[1] Vieilleville, Collect. Univ. xxix. p. 322.

[2] See Tavannes' account of it; he was the chief agent in the matter (Collect. Univ. xxvi. p. 114).

[3] Memoirs of Boyvin du Villars, quoted in note to Vieilleville, Collect. Univ. xxix. p. 326.

triumph, and lodged there several days. Toul and Verdun [1] fell without resistance into the hands of his captains; and this great result was achieved almost without bloodshed: the borders of France were pushed forwards to Metz, which commands the avenue by the Moselle, and to the line of hills which separate the Rhine-valley from the Seine.

Success attended the French on other fields also: the revolt of Siena enabled them to annoy the Spanish party in Italy: they seized Corsica, as a counterpoise to Genoa; they still occupied Piedmont. The old preponderance of the French crown seemed for a while to return.

In the North-east the French were too eager to grasp all. Instead of being only Protector of the liberties of Germany, Henry showed in the manner of his seizure of Metz, by occupying that important city with a strong French garrison and setting over it one of his own captains, that he was determined to hold what he had taken not for Germany but for himself. Consequently, when he attempted the same tactics at Strasburg, the citizens [2], seeing a large body of men draw near the gates, fired on them and killed some; and the French had to withdraw ashamed: and again when he marched to Spires, and sent Vieilleville to confer with the Council of the city, he found them suspicious, though professedly friendly, and could get no footing in the place [3]. The King soon saw, in spite of the impolitic urgings of the Constable, that by taking Metz he had really limited his own advance, and that Wissembourg must be his farthest point [4]. There came to him ambassadors from the Archbishops-Electors and other Princes, to beg him to protect, not to conquer; and lastly, the Elector Moritz sent him an

[1] Toul at the same time with Metz; Verdun apparently (for authorities differ) a little later.

[2] Vieilleville, Collect. Univ. xxx. p. 8: 'Disants que ceux de Metz, pour ce qu'ils parlent françois, se sont laissez surprendre à des François; mais ceux qui ne parlent que allemand ne se veulent laisser tromper par des *Franchimants*.'

[3] Vieilleville, Collect. Univ. xxx. pp. 25, sqq. His account of the Council of Spires is most interesting.

[4] Vieilleville, ibid. p. 37.

envoy to let him know that the war between him and the Emperor was almost at an end, and peace likely to be restored in Germany. These things, and the threatening aspect of affairs on the Picard frontier, where the Queen of Hungary (Mary, the Emperor's sister) had a large force ready to invade France, made Henry think it well to turn his back on the Rhine. Lorraine was very friendly to the French side, while Alsace was thoroughly German in speech and feeling. The King secured the Bishoprics and entered Luxemburg, hoping by this diversion to draw the Queen of Hungary out of Flanders. His army was very much weakened by sickness and the difficulties of the retreat: Vieilleville, who commanded one division, leaves us a graphic account of his struggles through the Vosges: he prided himself on having brought the first map of the 'cosmography,' as he calls it, of the course of the Rhine into France[1].

In Luxemburg, the French army reduced several strong places, while the King lay ill at Sedan; on his recovery, he marched in the direction of Guise, taking the little castles and strongholds on the way. Then, heavy rains coming on, he broke up his army, and the campaign was at an end. Vendôme[2] was set with one half of the forces to recover Hesdin; the rest dispersed and went home; and thus ended the great 'Austrasian' expedition. 'It lasted only three months and fourteen days,' says Vieilleville[3], and might easily have re-united the district, 'admirable in beauty and wealth,' with France, of which it 'had been erewhile the first and principal seat:' he ends by hinting that the folly and arrogance of Anne of Montmorency, the Constable, caused the failure of the campaign. Still, the Bishoprics were a great and solid gain to France: Francis of Guise was left in Metz to defend that city, and Vieilleville himself went to Verdun, to put it in a state to stand a siege. There and at Toul he did very good service in the next campaign.

[1] Vieilleville, Collect. Univ. xxx. p. 44: 'Une carte de la cosmographie du traist du Rhin.'

[2] Vendôme, at this time Governor of Picardy, was Antony, king of Navarre, the father of Henry IV.

[3] Vieilleville, ibid p. 89.

That campaign (1552–1553) was very critical for the rival powers. Charles V had made terms with Moritz, and Albert Alcibiades of Brandenburg had rallied to his side; all Germany seemed to desire the recovery of the Bishoprics. An army of eighty thousand men was gathered, with the Emperor at its head. In October 1552 he laid siege to Metz[1], in spite of the lateness of the season and against the advice of his captains, who wished him first to try the easier cities, Toul and Verdun. The Duke of Guise and Montmorency, forgetting their rivalry, did their best: Tavannes and Vieilleville, the former from Verdun, the latter from Toul, kept vigilant watch, seized towns, carried off provisions, and annoyed the Germans and Spaniards, whenever they could. The one success gained against the French was the defeat and capture of the Duke of Aumâle by Albert of Brandenburg. But this was no counterpoise to the failure to take Metz: batteries, mines, assaults, were all in vain: the wintry weather, the terrible sickness of the troops, and the disaffection of the Protestants, all fought against Charles: angry and worn out with the gout, the Emperor in December raised the siege and withdrew, with the loss of half his army. It was the wreck and ruin of all his schemes, the evidence of a falling power. The successes of his Flemings in Picardy, the capture of Therouenne and Hesdin, were but a poor set-off against this great and permanent failure: the war on the Northern frontier languished; the Constable, so hot and eager in Lorraine, was slow and unsuccessful in Picardy. He refused to fight, ravaged the country, as he had treated Provence; and allowed the enemy to withdraw untouched. The Northern war in 1554 was almost equally uneventful, a game of pawns without a plan.

The marriage of Mary, the newly-crowned Queen of England, with Philip of Spain, had not yet time to bear fruit: there was too much uncertainty and discontent in England to allow the new sovereign to side effectually with her father-in-law.

[1] The details are to be found in Cimber and Danjou, I. iii. pp. 117, sqq., where there is a diary of the operations, day by day.

France was anxious for peace: a war without glory, a treasury without money, a Court full of mean intrigues, commerce at a low ebb, religious parties glowering at each other;—all these things made peace necessary. Nor was Germany less inclined to pause: the Emperor was overwhelmed with his infirmities; his hands were all knotted and gnarled with the gout: he could scarcely open a letter: he needed rest, and was doubtless already meditating the step he took ere long. His territories were falling to pieces: 'hundreds of villages and townships in Italy and the Netherlands were reckoned to have disappeared within these forty years[1].' Germany, which he had fondly thought was pacified after Mühlberg, had again raised her head: the King of the Romans, his brother Ferdinand, refused to bow to his will, and was inclined to treat the Princes of the Empire with courtesy and moderation, in view of his own election to the Imperial throne. The Diet of Augsburg in 1555, though in many ways it showed that the great head of the Princely and Lutheran party in Germany was dead (for Moritz had fallen in the arms of victory at Sievershausen in 1553[2]) still in the main carried out the principles laid down in the Pacification of Passau (1552). The Peace of Augsburg closed for a long time the open warfare between Catholics and Lutherans, giving equal rights to both, and placing the religious interests of Germany in the hands of the Princes. It was a great victory of the Princely over the Imperial power: it declared loudly that the division between North and South Germany was real and permanent: it showed to the world that the life-long struggles, the grand ideas, the all-embracing system of Charles V, were but vanity, and that religious division and princely independence, not Church unity and Imperial omnipotence, would be the final outcome of the weary strife. For three years the great Emperor had seen these adverse fortunes rolling up against him: he

[1] La Vallée, Histoire des Français, ii. p. 391.

[2] He had been entrusted by the Imperial Chamber with the task of reducing to order Albert Alcibiades, Markgraf of Brandenburg. His victory, though it cost him his life, paralysed the movements of the Emperor against France on her northern and eastern frontiers.

began to sigh for shelter from the storm. His physicians warned him that he could no longer bear the fatigues of the camp; they told him that it was impossible for him to live in Germany; and that he must cease to travel from point to point of his great Empire. He probably felt that a young prince was needed to bear a burden too heavy for his enfeebled shoulders. He was anxious also to secure for Philip the tranquil succession to his dignities: he was weary of fighting a lost battle; he felt that death would be upon him ere long: lastly, he yearned for ease and quiet, not only to prepare for the end, but that he might enjoy the pleasures of the table for a brief season. All these reasons, petty and great, reflecting his character, led him to decide on abdication. He achieved his purpose leisurely: for first he handed over to Philip the Italian possessions: then, in October, 1555, the Overlordship of the Netherlands; then, in January, 1556, the crown of Spain; lastly, he resigned the Imperial diadem in August, 1556, and Ferdinand was at once elected in his room. He withdrew to the Monastery of Yuste in Estramadura, where he lived a couple of years in peace, occupied with the equal care of soul and stomach, and died in 1558.

A new period of international history begins from his retirement. Spain and Germany were cut asunder; Spain and England closely united; the Catholic reaction seemed likely to make great progress in Europe. Philip, a very different man from his father, narrow and clear, tenacious and an unwearied worker;—one who showed no small shrewdness in his dealings with men, and in whose 'scribblings on the margin,' at which it is the fashion to sneer, we find plentiful evidence of ability;—was at first sight the very man to prevail, and to carry out those ideas of Catholic and Spanish supremacy which guided his career from end to end. Everything was promising for him at first: Victory, who had left his father's car, returned to his: the political conditions of Europe were favourable; Germany was weary and peaceful, England his ally, Italy under his feet, France misgoverned and defeated. Yet the movement of the world went on, and the powers which the Reformation had called

into being in Europe reasserted themselves, and mocked the Spanish strength: Spain, the chosen sword of the reaction, the secular arm of reviving Catholicism, with her unrivalled soldiery, her tenacity and pride of purpose, her unflinching Inquisition, shattered herself against the earthen walls of Holland, and sank before the rising energies of the Protestant Sea Powers.

Meanwhile France, left somewhat on one side, had leisure to consider, with many throes and much misery, her own civil and religious problems. Each question in turn is bitterly contested; none comes to a complete solution. This is her special difficulty, that she tends for so long a time to an equilibrium of dissatisfied parties. No French party accepts defeat; none knows how to turn victory into permanent success.

Among the events which combine to make the year 1555 notable in history is the accession of Paul IV, the 'Theatine Pope,' as the French chroniclers love to call him, Caraffa, once Bishop of Chieti[1], whence comes the name of the Theatine Order which he founded. Paul IV, zealous, honest, narrow, and passionate, hated the Spanish domination; rather than suffer the arrogance of Spanish soldiery he would stoop to any act; he had Lutheran soldiers in his pay; he drew towards the Turks; he negociated with the French Court. The Guises, whose power had become very great since the late successful defence of Metz, seconded his efforts: they too were still very hostile to Spain. Henry, swayed by them, concluded an alliance with the Pope; whereon a war began at once (1556). The care of Charles V had left his able general, the Duke of Alba, at Naples; and he was now instructed to menace Rome: on the other hand, while the harsh and incompetent Constable of Montmorency was sent northward, Francis, Duke of Guise, was despatched with all haste into Italy to support the Pope, and to bring over the Italian princes. Early in 1557 he had established himself with some solidity in the peninsula; where Brissac, a fine soldier, and far his superior in that respect, had been in command: in spite of neglect from home, Brissac had held his own in Pied-

[1] Theate in its Latin form.

mont, had surprised Casale in 1555, and had successfully resisted the Duke of Alva's attempts to drive him back. Milan and Siena were friendly; Parma, Piacenza, and the Duke of Florence declared themselves neutral; Ferrara made alliance with France. Had Guise been content to secure his foothold in Lombardy, thence pushing on to protect Venice or Rome, as need might be, his position would have been very strong: unwisely, after the French fashion, he thought more of uncertain claims than of present advantages: and as he deemed himself the representative of the Anjou family, and heir to the throne of Naples[1], he hastily passed on, splendidly welcomed, to Rome, and thence towards Naples. He got as far as Civitella in the nearer Abruzzi, and laid siege to it: Alva, however, though scarcely a match for Marshal Brissac, was too strong for the Duke of Guise, who had to raise the siege and fall back on Rome. Alva followed on his heels; but before any action could take place Guise was recalled with all his force; for France was tottering under the stroke of invasion from the North. The angry and vehement Pope, finding that the French were abandoning him, bade farewell to the General with the bitter words, 'Go then, you have done little for your King's service, still less for the Church, and nothing at all for your own honour[2].' And he made his peace with Philip, as well as he could. Brissac was left behind to defend Piedmont.

Thus ended this last attempt on Italy: the age of Italian wars, so fatal to France, is over: nor will that fair land for many years be trodden underfoot by the invader; no longer will it be styled the 'Cemetery of the French.'

Henry II at first had professed that this expedition of the Duke of Guise was no violation of the truce between him and Charles and Philip: but he soon showed that he meant war, by instructing Admiral Coligny, now governor of Picardy, to begin

[1] Francis of Guise was eldest son of Claude, who was second son (and eldest with issue) of Iolanthe, daughter of René II, titular King of Naples. See above, p. 251.

[2] Sarpi, History of the Council of Trent, Bk. V. A. 1557.

hostilities. Gaspard of Coligny, eldest of the three Châtillon brothers, who all in the end embraced the reformed opinions, though one of them was a Cardinal, stood high in the favour of Henry II. On the death of Annebaut in 1552 he was named Admiral, and set to defend the northern frontier. Here he was ill-supported; for the best soldiers were in Italy: the Legions were only paper-troops; a few mercenaries, ten thousand Germans, were hired. Philip, on the contrary, placed a formidable force under the command of Philibert of Savoy; and, in spite of the ill-will of the English, induced Queen Mary to declare war on Henry, and to send some ten thousand men over to Calais, that they might co-operate with his troops on the Netherland frontier. Charles V from his retirement at Yuste warmly seconded his son with advice and influence, watching the progress of affairs with the deepest interest. A feint in the direction of Rocroi was successful; the French hastened to the Champagne border, only to learn that their enemy was gone, and was threatening S. Quentin on the Somme. That town, poorly fortified with crumbling walls, and lying low, defended chiefly by a great marsh, was one of the main bulwarks of Paris: S. Quentin taken, there was little to arrest a resolute enemy till he reached the capital. It was all-important that the Duke of Savoy should be delayed as long as possible: and Coligny did not hesitate to sacrifice himself to the task. He succeeded in entering the town by night; and though he knew that it was incapable of serious defence, he cheered and roused the inhabitants; the ramparts were hurriedly repaired, and the best provision that could be made was made at once. D'Andelot, the youngest Châtillon, who had been sent forward by the Constable Montmorency to join Coligny, was repulsed by the besiegers. Meanwhile the Constable cautiously drew near, to relieve his nephew if he could. Philibert, however, had sixty thousand men with him, and his English allies had come up from Calais; the place was closely invested. The only passage by which help could be thrown into the town was by the great marsh to the eastward. The Admiral had marked out certain passages through it: it was arranged that

while the Constable with his main army occupied the attention of the enemy by a false attack, D'Andelot with victual and a strong force should cross the river in boats, wade the marsh, and so get into S. Quentin. The plans were not well laid. Only part of the stores could be got into the town, and only five hundred men with D'Andelot; while Montmorency neglected to secure a *chaussée* which crossed the low ground above the town, his only way of retreat. Consequently when, on seeing that D'Andelot had entered S. Quentin, he turned to withdraw, he found that his neglect had cost him dear; the narrow roadway was already in the enemy's hands, and the Spanish and the Flemish horse, commanded by Count Egmont, were masters of the point at which the narrow path, leaving the morass, rises between low hills. The main body of the Spaniards also crossed the swampy ground, which the Constable had thought impassable, and he now found himself hemmed in on every side. The Duke of Nevers, who commanded the cavalry, cut his way through, and with the Prince of Condé escaped to Laon at the head of a fragment of the army. Egmont, whose vigorous counsels had won this great success for Philip, now with a gallant charge of horse fell on the French, who at the same moment were assaulted in front and on either flank; the rout was instantaneous. Half their troops were destroyed; the rest scattered or captives: the Duke of Enghien was slain, Montmorency, the Duke of Montpensier, the Marshal S. André, and a crowd of great nobles were prisoners; all the French standards, all their artillery, except two pieces, were taken. Of the conquerors barely fifty perished: Philip received with cold joy the spoils of this great victory; and sent off orders to Spain for the building in its remembrance of the Palace of the Escurial, which is shaped like a gridiron, because the battle was fought on S. Lawrence's Day (10 August, 1557). Those round the Spanish King urged him to mask S. Quentin with a small force, and with his main army to descend at once on Paris, driving before him the broken remnants of the French. His coldness and caution forbade him to take the bolder

part: and when, as his father at Yuste said, 'he ought to have been under the walls of Paris,' he was still at S. Quentin: for he had no military gifts, none of the eagerness of youth; only a slow determined will; he would run no risks, but secure what he had won; and so judging, lost a splendid chance.

For France was assuredly saved thereby from great evils: the Duke of Nevers had time to garrison the towns with such force as he could gather: Catherine de' Medici in Paris harangued the people, who made also a free gift of three hundred thousand francs; money poured in from other towns: mercenaries were hired, the nobles and men-at-arms throughout the realm were bidden to assemble at Laon, under the Duke of Nevers; the Duke of Guise was summoned back from Italy. The tenacious stand made by Coligny in S. Quentin, though the issue could not be doubtful for a moment, had given time for these preparations for defence to be made: for seventeen days longer the Admiral bravely kept the whole Spanish army at bay. Then at last, the weak ramparts crumbled away, and his little garrison was overwhelmed and the town taken by assault. It was horribly sacked, burnt, plundered: the inhabitants were all driven forth into the fields [1]. Disorder, as usual, fell on the victorious troops: they quarrelled over the spoil, demanding money; the English could not agree with the Spaniards; for they had no heart in the business, and wanted to be at home to resist the Scots, who had taken advantage of their absence, and were threatening the North. The army, feebly led, was capable of little more. The occupation of the Vermandois was the only direct result of the brilliant victory of S. Quentin.

In France herself the efforts were more durable: the disaster caused a kind of revolution which substituted for the Colignys the great House of Guise with its independent half-royal claims. The Duke of Guise, who had already won credit in Metz, was now looked up to as the only man able to save his country; his

[1] Coligny has left us a brief memoir of the siege, written in his captivity; it is to be found in the 8th vol. of the first series of the Michaud Collection of Memoirs, pp. 567, sqq.

rival the Constable [1] was discredited and a prisoner; the Cardinal Charles of Lorraine, the longest head in France, took charge of finance and home-affairs; the Duke was named the King's Lieutenant-General, with the fullest powers. Henry was very unwilling to make this change, for he dreaded the great power of the Guises; but he could not help himself.

Francis, Duke of Guise, brilliantly seized the opportunity: instead of wasting his army on the defence of Picardy, where in a desolated district, in dead of winter, he would have found himself face to face with the victorious Flemish and Spaniards, he determined to make a bold attack on Calais, which, as was known, had been left almost unguarded. The fullest success attended this vigorous stroke; the two covering fortresses, Nieullay, which defended the only causeway across marshes, and Risbank, which protected the approach from the Dunes along the shore, were both taken by swift assault, and Calais herself speedily surrendered (Jan. 1558 [2]). The whole siege lasted but seven days. The blow fell very heavily on England. Queen Mary's saying is well-known; her people, with wounded pride and angry sympathies, detested the Spanish alliance; the fall of Calais helped to secure the quiet succession of Elizabeth on the death of Mary in the following autumn. We may imagine how the popularity of the Duke of Guise grew; he became omnipotent in France; the multitude overlooked the still greater though less brilliant services which the devotion of Coligny had done them. To save by defeat is far less striking than to make a startling success: and Coligny, a prisoner, was forgotten.

In this winter the exigencies of government were so great that Henry II was constrained to summon an assembly of notables in Paris; it is usually dignified with the title of a meet-

[1] De Thou, Histor. Lib. xix (tom. iii. p. 208, ed. 1609): 'Sane Momorantius . . . . postquam eum fortuna deseruit, hominum quoque favorem amisit; quod non solum familiae illustri nocuit, sed toti rei Gallicae. Nam aemuli . . . . rerum gubernaculis ea occasione admoti, in vacuum venere, et populi favorem, qui Momorantium reliquerat, invasere, quem semel arreptum . . . . semper retinuerunt.'

[2] Tavannes, who was there, boasts that his booty was in books, Greek, Hebrew, and Latin (Collect. Univ. xxvi. p. 173).

ing of the States General. The King's 'morning-council' had decided on a great loan to be raised from the richer classes; the clergy were represented by a certain number of priests 'deputed for the generality,' a phrase which might have been interesting on constitutional grounds, had the manner of choice been more satisfactory. There were scarcely any nobles present, and those there were not a body of representatives: the chief magistrates of the good towns did duty for the Third Estate. The legal profession, contrary to all usage, was made into a Fourth Estate; and the Presidents of the different Parliaments took rank above the Burghers. Such a body was but a mockery of a States General; it only serves to show how slight was the footing of that institution in France, and how entirely it was in the hands of the Court. While they were sitting, news of the taking of Calais arrived; the enthusiasm carried all before it. The Cardinal of Lorraine got his great loan voted by the Third Estate and the Clergy; the former obtained in return the removal of some restrictions on trade; to the latter a promise was made that heresy should be crushed; and both were satisfied.

After a triumphal visit to Calais, Henry returned to Paris and with great pomp married the Dauphin to Mary Stuart; the chief part of the loan was, as usual, wasted in shows. In this alliance he gave way to the eagerness of the Guises, against the wishes of Diana of Poitiers, who feared their growing power. It was a great advance for them; they had the credit of renewing the old connexion of France and Scotland, which now seemed likely to be joined to the French crown, for a secret treaty bound the young Queen to bring over her kingdom with her. It was the beginning of an evil time for her. She plunged into that tangled maze of intrigues, which by degrees, like seaweed round the limbs of the swimmer, baffling his supreme efforts and drawing him to death, wore out all her strength, and brought her to a tragic end. The Guises thought that by thus placing their niece on the steps of the throne, they would become absolute masters of both crowns.

War was languidly resumed in the spring of 1558; Luxem-

burg and Artois were attacked. The Duke of Guise took Thionville and pushed the success of Metz one step farther north; De Thermes, in command on the Flemish border, similarly advanced that of Calais by taking Dunkirk and even Nieuport. It was planned that the two armies should combine, and penetrate into Flanders; but Guise was paralysed by the mutiny of the German mercenaries; and while De Thermes waited on the coast, Egmont, with fortunate audacity, made a swift march to Gravelines, and barred the French retreat. De Thermes seeing him strongly posted, decided to wait till low tide[1], and then to force his way along the sands, whereby he hoped to turn Egmont's position. Egmont, however, met him with that cavalry which he knew so well how to handle, and held him in check. The battle was still uncertain; De Thermes had the river Aa behind him, the enemy in front and on his left, the sea to his right, and for a while the fierce bravery of his Gascon troops seemed likely to force a way. But at the very crisis of this wild battle on the sands, ten sail appeared, borne on a favourable breeze. They proved to be English ships, which standing close in shore, poured their broadsides into the defenceless right flank of the French. Stunned by a calamity so unexpected, which at once destroyed all the advantage of their position, the French could do no more. One more vigorous charge by Egmont, and the rout began; the army was as utterly ruined as Montmorency's had been before S. Quentin. We know how the victor was treated; the jealousy of Alva and the suspicion of Philip first depreciated his brilliant victories, and then led him to the scaffold. The hostility between Fleming and Spaniard begins from this moment, through the brilliant services of Count Egmont.

Gravelines settled the question of peace or war; the Cardinals Granvella and Lorraine had already been intriguing together. The Constable was eager for peace; he saw the

[1] 'À la Blanchetaque,' says Tavannes (Collect. Univ. xxvii. p. 5), using the very word which was used of the Somme ford near its mouth, at which Edward III crossed before Crécy.

Guises daily growing stronger, his own party and his personal influence at the lowest point; could he but recover liberty, the King would welcome him as a counterpoise to the Lorraine-party which he dreaded. So while the Cardinals and Philip made peace, in order that they might have leisure to attack heresy, the moderate party, headed by Montmorency and Coligny, made peace, that they might recover their standing in France. Either way, at Cateau-Cambrésis, they sacrificed France. 'The King was led to make a base and damaging peace,' says De Thou, 'the strength of the realm being worn out by the slaughters of S. Quentin and Gravelines; it was a peace which introduced a state of things worse and sadder than that of war[1].'

The true meaning of the Peace was this:—All the questions as to the Balance of Power, all the combinations arising out of the abdication of Charles V and the death of Queen Mary of England, the Italian problems, and the other political difficulties of Europe, were adjourned in face of the momentous religious question, which, now that spiritual despotism in its most vehement form was pitted against the spirit of liberty, had become the all-absorbing subject of men's thoughts[2].

The new Government of England, glad to escape from foreign complications, made terms with France. The strong and sagacious counsellors of the young Queen knew well that neither her interests nor those of her people demanded war in that quarter. It was but a patched-up affair; still it served the purposes of all.

The Empire and the Princes of Germany, at the same time that they still asserted their rights over the three Bishoprics, let it be understood that they would not go to war with France to recover them. Finally, Henry and Philip were equally eager to be clear of the risks and unbearable expenses of war. It is hard to say which monarch was the more penniless. 'Spain can do no more for me,' said Philip to Granvella, 'I must make peace.'

[1] De Thou, Hist. sui temp. lib. xxiii (tom. iv. p. 34, ed. 1609).
[2] La Vallée, Hist. des Français, ii. p. 395.

And so it came about that the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis was signed in April, 1559. It was the last act of Henry's life, and it closed the struggle for a while. France and Spain were, for a season, to cease their rivalry; looking forwards, it heralded the coming storm; the religious wars, the death-throes of the Netherlands, the new rivalry of England and Spain, were impending. The House of Savoy was reinstated by Philip, as a reward for the great services of Philibert; and thereby France was finally cut away from Italy, and her avenues thitherwards solidly blocked. On the other hand she retained the three Bishoprics and Calais, menaces to Germany and England, advantages which more than outweighed her losses. A double treaty of marriage, uniting the Houses of France, Spain, and Savoy, was agreed to; finally, secret clauses were drawn, in which the Guises in France and the Granvellas in the Netherlands and Spain developed their plans for stamping heresy to powder.

For more than thirty years, France will be agitated to her very foundations by civil troubles. The throne, the nobles, the church, the liberties of the people, the freedom of opinion, will all suffer loss. One or two upright men, a Coligny or a L'Hôpital, and one or two clever persons, such as the subtle Queen Mother, will somewhat relieve the gloom; but no light of day breaks the darkness in which men walk, till the gallant manliness of Henry of Navarre hews a way for better times to come. He too is tainted with the evils of the age; still he is a man, and in a true man much can be forgiven.

PART II.

THE CIVIL WARS.

CHAPTER I.

The Reformation-Movement in France.

All ages of civil strife are dreary: sometimes, as in the warfare at the time of the English Commonwealth, the importance of the principles at stake and the absence of brutality in the combatants lift petty struggles into national greatness: sometimes the genius of the historian redeems them from obscurity, as with Thucydides and the Greek home-wars; sometimes the greatness of a Cromwell gives dignity to the contest: usually, however, civil war is a field for personal ambitions and partisan interests; the actual warfare sinks into raids and land piracies; the soldiery become brutal; the leaders are selfish, the followers inhuman. The wars of the Roses in England, the Thirty Years' War in Germany, the Civil Wars of France, alike display, on different scenes and with different underlying principles and motives, the same surface-characteristics, and fill the mind with the same sense of weariness, almost of despair.

Perhaps the most singular point in the history of the French Civil wars is the fact that, for once in her annals, France allowed her religious feelings to overbear her political instincts. In the earlier period of these wars the Huguenots gave tone to the struggle by fighting for their faith: in the latter the Leaguers were filled with the darker spirit of Crusaders. Personal motives preponderated over political principles; it is also perhaps fair to add, that even the political tendencies of these

days were hostile to all sound constitutional progress. Aristocratic autonomy siding with religious independence on the one hand, and the supremacy of the dominant Church on the other, supported now by the monarch, now by the people, strove together for the mastery. The Huguenots relied on Germany, on the Netherlands, on England; their antagonists on Spain: not till towards the end of the struggle did a national party emerge, one which professedly made political and French interests supreme, and left the religious questions to be settled by a kind of toleration. This moderate Catholic party, half-way between Jesuits and Huguenots, gradually absorbed into itself all but the most fiery spirits of both sides: when the Duke of Mayenne from the Catholics, and Henry of Navarre from the Huguenots, had enrolled themselves under the banner of the 'Politiques,' as the party was styled, the long-wished-for peace of the realm was attained. Eight civil wars in desolate succession, lasting a quarter of a century, annihilated for the time the consideration of France abroad and her prosperity at home.

As then this age unrolls the strife of creeds, we must begin by some enquiry into the progress of the new opinions. One is struck by the slowness with which, contrary to common belief, France adopts strange ideas. She lagged far behind in the Renaissance; she never, like Germany, or England, or Switzerland, accepted the movements of the Reformation; she never took a serious interest in constitutional questions till long after they had been fought out in other countries.

Let us consider the following points: Why was France so slow in accepting the Reformation? Why did such new opinions as she did adopt take a Calvinistic form? Why were the same views connected with aristocratic tendencies in France, and with democratic movements in Switzerland?

The first question receives a partial answer when we say as we have said, that France never cared much for the Renaissance movement. She missed that preparation for the new opinions which in other lands had been given by the classical and artistic revival. She had but little popular cultivation and little desire

for it. In country districts the people were quite content to remain as they were in this respect: the struggle for existence was very severe, and there was little room for anything else. The cities, again, those strongholds of reform in England and Germany, in France were much divided: Paris herself was bitterly opposed to the new ideas, though a considerable party among her burghers, as in all other large towns, adopted the reformed opinions. But French towns were little accustomed to independent action or local self-management; and the older influences were very strong even in the most flourishing cities. On the other hand, the nobles, whether from their higher culture, or from their Germanic blood, or from the spirit of independence still strong in them, generally and warmly accepted the Reformation. They, however, were not likely to commend it to the people at large. It brought no serious amendment of moral life. The nobles were vicious, haughty, self-seeking; there was in them, as in all France, a mocking temper, which went ill with the meekness of the Gospel, or with the earnestness of political revolt. Lastly, the court and throne for a while defended and liked the reformers, regarding them as an outcome of the Renaissance. Only when they showed a sterner spirit, and offended against good taste, did the King turn against them. Royalty and its surroundings seemed to aim at setting up a middle school of politicians; it would reform abuses in the Church, introduce serious learning, and make peace in Church and State: in the earliest days, the days of Margaret, the sister of Francis I, and of the Duchess of Étampes, his mistress, the tendency of the Court had been towards Lutheran opinions. But it was never so strong as to take the lead in France. These ladies patronised Marot, and sang his poetical version of the Psalms; they had translations of the Bible on their tables; they protected the preachers: but after a while the anabaptist-troubles in Germany, and the image-breaking excesses of Paris, were quite enough to frighten them back into the belief that the old was better.

It has been reckoned that at the moment of the outbreak of

the Civil Wars half the aristocracy, and in fact almost all men under forty years of age[1], a considerable portion of the clergy, including several notable bishops[2], but not more than a tenth of the people had adopted the new opinions[3]. France had been more independent of the Papacy than other nations, and was not galled by the yoke as Germany had been. Moreover, her moral sense not being very high, she was little outraged by the gross immoralities of seculars or regulars. Again, the monarchs of France saw no advantage in a strong clergy, attached to the throne, as the English Church was: they rather would have dreaded it, as likely to interfere with the advance of their absolute authority. Perhaps the strongest cause of all lay in the fact that the influence of the religious sentiment has always been low in France: that it has rarely taken a personal or independent tone; and that the Renaissance, so far as it settled there, turned towards a critical and naturalistic philosophy rather than to that enthusiasm which engenders a religious revolution[4]. It is interesting to note that the nobles, with their more Germanic instincts, alone seemed to have any natural aptitude for those new opinions, which tended to strengthen what is personal and free. The Reformation gave to the noblesse a fresh start: and had their aims been higher, their personal characters purer, the absolutist triumph in the seventeenth century might have been averted by the force of this new motive power.

And these new opinions took in France the Calvinistic form, partly because the French nobles had but little in common with

[1] The Venetian Ambassador, speaking of the last years of Henry II, says definitely, 'Relazione delle cose di Francia,' t. iii. p. 20 (quoted by La Vallée, ii. p. 400), that, *with the exception of the low people*, the French have 'apostatised.'

[2] Beside Briçonnet of Meaux there were Odet of Coligny, Cardinal Châtillon, Saint Romain Archbishop of Aix, Montluc Bishop of Valence, Caraccioli Bishop of Troyes, Brabançon Bishop of Pamiers, and Guillart Bishop of Chartres, who all, more or less openly, embraced the opinions of the Huguenots.

[3] So says Prosper de Sainte Croix (who writes as a strong partisan on the Catholic side), under date of Jan. 1562; in Cimber et Danjou, Archives, I. vi. p. 18.

[4] Martin, Histoire de France, vii. pp. 507, 508.

the Lutheranism of Germany; partly because the more political and logical temper of the Calvinistic theology was natural to them; partly, it may be, because the exclusiveness of the doctrine of Election was congenial to a noblesse wont to regard itself as a class apart, for it made the elect into a religious as well as a social aristocracy:—be the cause what it may, the more scientific predestinarian doctrine as expounded by a true Frenchman, Calvin, found more ready entry into France than did the more mystical and dreamy theology of Luther.

At first, indeed, as was obvious, the movement came from Germany; yet even then it was connected with Erasmus rather than with Luther. France had an inner spring of Reformation, in the unextinguished protest against Rome kept up by the mountaineers of Dauphiny, the Waldensians. Their influence however was local, and could not affect the heart of France: it was a frontier movement, looking as much one way as the other. The Lutheran views, on the contrary, came at once to the centre of the kingdom, into the Seine valley: we find that many of the religious orders, specially the Augustinians and Carmelites, listen to the voice of the great monk of Wittemberg; and considerable numbers of the burghers in Champagne towns and in the capital itself become interested in the new opinions. For a while their head-quarters were at Meaux, where Briçonnet the gentle and pious Bishop, by his teaching and example, commended the Lutheran tenets and the study of the Scriptures to the Court and the people. He found support within the palace walls; Francis I was not unfriendly, Margaret of Valois went farther, and encouraged him to advance. But Briçonnet was not made of martyr-stuff; and the Court wavered between self-indulgence and a love for the new learning and its later theological development. The popular influences in Paris were completely set against change. Nowhere was the orthodox mob so staunch; nowhere could it be so easily roused to fury.

The Reformation in Germany found support and protection in its infancy from independent princes and compact Imperial

cities: in France no such help was possible. The cities were unused to corporate life: the nobles, with all their good-will for the reformed tenets, had no position answering to that of the German Princes: the nearest parallel lies between those armed bodies of young nobles, who escorted the preachers through the streets of Paris and guarded their services, and the knightly champions of Luther in Germany, men like Ulrich of Hutten or Franz of Sickingen: consequently the movement was liable to be crushed in detail, and for a long time could not take such a constructive and organised form, as would enable it to expand and resist the attacks which must be made on it. In the north of France the old opinions easily prevailed: in spite of the Court, bitter persecution either destroyed the more prominent reformers or drove them into exile: and after a while the Court itself threw its influence into the same scale.

In the latter days of Francis I another set of impulses began to work; and the logical writings, partly political, partly religious, of Calvin arrested the attention of all thinking men in France. The stream now flows no longer from the Rhine, whither it had been again driven back by repression; but from Geneva, and from free and aristocratic Switzerland. It becomes distinctly Latin in character: it is logical, almost legal in tone: it spreads like a flood over the south and west of France. Lutheranism entirely disappears from the country: the Presbyterian form of Church government, and the characteristic doctrine of Election, mark the movement in Switzerland, in the Low Countries, in France, and along the western frontier of Germany: even England, with its strongly-organised Church, though it distinctly refuses Presbyterianism, is deeply tinctured with Calvinistic opinions. In France herself, although there were scattered congregations in the north and east, the reformed views made their home in the south and west. The head-quarters of resistance to them lay in Picardy and Paris; the Calvinists' chief force, speaking roughly, was south of the Loire. Their home was in Poitou and the other western provinces; in later times their most important town was La Rochelle, important alike for

offence or defence, and a point of junction with their friends in England. These southern and western districts had, in the reign of Francis I, been the scene of more than one disturbance: they resisted the severe and arbitrary taxation of that reign. We may also notice in them a marked outburst of Republican literature; the higher culture of the South always looking towards ancient Rome. At the same time the noblesse in those parts, thanks to the English wars and to the distance from Paris, aimed at a greater independence. Already we may note that curious and interesting junction of an Aristocratic with a Republican tone, so often seen in the Huguenot movement.

Towards the end of his life Henry II, under influence of Diana of Poitiers and the Cardinal of Lorraine, had pressed more hardly on the Huguenots; he regarded them as a danger to his throne; 'we run the risk,' he said, 'of falling into a kind of republic like the Swiss.' In 1557 he allowed the Inquisition to be introduced into France, although its action was impeded by the great lawyers of the time, who regarded it with jealousy as an independent and dangerous tribunal: the arrest of Du Bourg, one of the leading spirits of the Parliament of Paris, was a kind of reply to this resistance: it was also a warning note of civil war.

Yet, in spite of this opposition, in the teeth of royal edicts and severe penalties and even executions, these years from 1555 to 1559 are the time when the Huguenot opinions made their greatest advance in France. We are told that in these four years two thousand Huguenot churches sprang up: the processes of construction and consolidation went rapidly forward. Each church had its little council or consistory, each province its synod, and, from these provincial synods, deputies met from time to time in a general national synod. Their confession of faith was drawn and agreed to; a system of election of pastors arranged; a common fund established: Calvinism had little or no basis in the popular good-will; in all other respects it suddenly sprang into a powerful and aggressive organisation.

With a firm hold on the districts to the South and West, and led by a great party among the nobles, lending itself also to dreams of noble independence, Calvinism, at the close of the reign of Henry II, stood prepared to do battle with the growing fanaticism and strength of the Catholic party. It looked as if the two were the upper and nether millstones, between which the French monarchy must be ground to powder.

CHAPTER II.

The Strife of Parties before War.

When the Constable Montmorency and Admiral Coligny, once more free, had returned to Paris, they found the Court inclined to treat them with high favour[1], as a counterpoise to the overwhelming popularity of the Guise party. The 'heretics were burnt in France, more from fear lest they should follow the example of the Germans who had revolted' (i.e. from Charles V) 'than for their religion': being politically rather than theologically offensive to the Court. The Cardinal of Lorraine was very powerful; and his influence may be traced in these persecutions. Still, as yet the rivalry of parties showed no sign of outbreak: and the King, had he lived, might have succeeded in arbitrating between them. This, however, was not to be. In honour of the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis, he held high festival at Paris for the marriages of his two daughters, the elder to Philip II, the younger to Philibert of Savoy; thither came together as representatives of the Spanish King, the Duke of Alva, Egmont, and William, Prince of Orange, who now won his name of Silent by holding his peace when Alva disclosed to him, in an unlucky moment of confidence, his plans for the extermination of Protestantism. In the three days' tournament which took place Henry II distinguished himself; for his bodily strength was great: on the third day, as he tilted against a Scottish knight, Montgomery, his antagonist's lance was shivered; and a piece of it, as it splintered upwards off his

[1] 'M. le Connestable possedoit entierement le Roy.' Tavannes, Collect. Univ. xxvii. p. 13.

cuirass, lifted his visor from below and pierced him in his eye. 'The sight,' Tavannes tells us, 'froze the Constable's heart, for he saw his favour lost[1].' The King lingered two days and died.

The death of Henry II destroyed the equilibrium of parties: the Constable fell at once, and the Guises, seizing on the person of the Dauphin, carried with them the Queen Mother, and shot up at once to almost unlimited power and boundless hopes. The Dauphin, now Francis II, a youth of sixteen, devoted to his young wife, Mary Stewart, naturally leant towards her uncles[2], the Duke of Guise and the Cardinal of Lorraine. They were suspected already, and not without reason, of aiming even at the throne of France, in case the sickly children of Henry II left no issue. They drew out a pedigree, which showed them descended from Charles the Great: they had old claims on the throne of Naples. For the time, however, they were content to have Francis crowned and saluted as King of France and England: the royal couple quartered the arms of the two kingdoms. They also entered into communications with Philip of Spain, who condescended,—for they were strict Catholics in policy,—to promise his support. This, though it foreshadowed the combinations of the League, was not very sincere at the time; for Philip was seriously alarmed by the pretensions of Mary Stewart to the English crown: England and Scotland joined with France would have been a very powerful combination, and a menace to his authority in the Netherlands, if not in Spain. It was in consequence of this fear that Philip allowed Queen Elizabeth's succession to the English throne to pass unchallenged and unopposed.

Charles, Cardinal of Lorraine, without the brilliancy of his soldier-brother, the Duke Francis, had far more useful gifts of government: and he was a supple churchman, an acute politician, a very successful and vigorous administrator both of his

[1] Tavannes, Collect. Univ. xxvii. p. 17.

[2] Claude of Guise's daughter, Mary of Guise, married James V of Scotland; their daughter was Mary Stewart. See above, p. 263.

diocese and of the royal finance; he had enjoyed a great share of Henry's confidence, and had stood his ground even when his rivals seemed most powerful. Whether as a matter of mere policy, or sincerely, he showed a decided leaning towards the Lutheran theology, to which his Lorraine extraction made him a neighbour. He was a man of no moral nobleness, consumed with ambition, never forgetting himself, stingy, slow to pardon, careless of the feelings of others: on the other hand his presence was commanding and dignified[1]: he may be reckoned among the most remarkable of the ecclesiastical statesmen of France. Over Francis II he was all-powerful, and rode the storms of opposition, of plot and outbreak, with a great sense of power. His brother, the Duke, was of inferior metal: a second-rate soldier, he had, by two fortunate chances at Metz and Calais, gained a reputation far beyond his merits; for in this respect he was far inferior to the more obscure Brissac, who was one of the first captains of the age, a blunt rude man without any gifts of intrigue or fitness for Court-life[2]. On the other side stood the Constable Montmorency, stern, harsh, dull in warfare, an unwavering Catholic, head of the party of dissatisfied nobles; and his three nephews, the Châtillon brothers, Coligny the Admiral, D'Andelot, Colonel of the Infantry, and Cardinal Châtillon, who all became Huguenots. As yet Admiral Coligny was rather the link between the dissatisfied noblesse and the Huguenots, than an actual leader of the Calvinists: his conversion dates from this period. He was the great man of his side: his courage, nobleness of character, high morality, self-sacrifice; his stedfast qualities, which shone most in the gloom of defeat; his unswerving attachment to his principles; his hatred of civil strife, which helped to bring him to his death;—all these qualities combined to lift him above mere partisanship; he was a hero, and had his times been happier, might have also been a great statesman. The nominal head of these men of the new ideas at this time was the King of Navarre, Antony of Bourbon, who

[1] See Ranke, Französische Geschichte, i. pp. 140, sqq.
[2] See Tavannes, Collect. Univ. xxvii. p. 23.

claimed the charge of the young King, as being heir presumptive to the throne. A man frivolous and light of nature, irresolute, timid, 'turning now hither and now thither, fluctuating vaguely between the parties[1].' His anxiety to recover his throne of Navarre, which had been seized by the Spaniards, or at least some compensation for the loss of it, made him the mere creature of Philip, who played on him with half-contemptuous falseness, and led him about with dreams and hopes of a new kingdom in the sweet softness of a Sicilian paradise. His younger brothers were the Cardinal Bourbon, and Louis, Prince of Condé, a man of far stronger character, who soon came to the forefront, though in the beginning he stood aside awhile to let the head of the family take the lead. Quiet and unobserved, Jeanne of Albret, Antony's spouse, had not yet shown her great qualities, which were not fully called forth till the successive changes of the civil wars swept away all the chiefs except Coligny, and left her with her young son Henry of Navarre, at the head of a dispirited and beaten party.

In the midst of them all stood the Queen Mother, Catherine de' Medici, a not unworthy companion of Queen Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots, in the trio of remarkable women of the time: they had all to exert their skill in intrigue, in flattery, even in flirtation; all were called on to move cautiously between parties, to attach men to themselves personally and politically, to play their weakness off against the strength of faction. Yet though the conditions of their existence were in some respects so much alike, their paths led them to very different ends: while Elizabeth, in circumstances more fortunate, in character more noble, steered a safe course between the reefs and shoals of her long reign, and left behind her a great reputation, built up on the greatness of a nation, Mary of Scots, the possible Queen of three great nations, after long buffetings, made sad shipwreck of her career, and Catherine was destined to see her high ambitions wither in the hot party strife of France, condemned to play on the more disgraceful passions of men or even

[1] Tavannes, Collect. Univ. xxvii. p. 41.

to stoop to the assassin's dagger, fated to pass down to posterity as an immoral and unprincipled adventurer. And yet she has claims to consideration. The circumstances of her life were hopelessly difficult and intricate; she was a foreigner, and almost without a party in France; she balanced and shifted ground and played with men, and all in the interests of moderation and even of toleration; she liked to listen to L'Hôpital, the wisest man of his time: at first she really sought the welfare of France, and strove to lift the monarchy above the din of contending factions. In working for these ends she showed more circumspection than enterprise; she was crafty, flexible, cat-like; 'not cruel or bad-natured on the one side; nor, on the other, well-principled or naturally good; her virtues and vices always depended on circumstances external to herself[1].' The portraits we have of her in her later life do her no justice: she must have grown coarse and heavy-looking: for when she first came into France she is described as handsome, tall, and always well-dressed; 'with the prettiest hand that ever was seen': a cheerful, pleasure-loving woman, with winning manners and a ready laugh, 'of her own nature she was jovial[2]': she was a beautiful rider, played well at all games, excelled at 'Palle mail,' could shoot with the crossbow; dearly loved a new dance, was ever getting up gay little ballets for bad weather; she embroidered in silk with marvellous skill; she was sparkling and clever in talk, very intelligent and subtle: she delighted in astronomy, built an observatory for her 'astrologer' Ruggieri, and listened eagerly to his science and predictions. With all this, she was exceeding ambitious, and desirous of power. Her early life in France must have been very trying: she was a foreigner, something of a parvenue; the Constable treated her 'as a merchant's daughter'; she bore no children for years, and men wished Francis I to send her back to Italy; her husband neglected her for Diana of Poitiers. To meet all this, she had infinite tact; her prudence was equalled by her patience; until in course

[1] Anquetil, Esprit de la Ligue, i. p. 72.

[2] 'Elle rioit volontiers, et aussi de son naturel elle estoit *joviale*,' says Brantôme, Collect. Univ. lxiii. p. 176.

of time she bore the Dauphin sons, and was in the end the mother of many children, who brought her little happiness, except in so far as they assured her position. Such a woman would quickly understand the difficult problems around her, and easily hit the weak points of the men with whom she had to do. 'To-day,' says Hénault, speaking of Henry's accident, 'the face of France is changed. The unfortunate death of the King has just put his spouse at the head of affairs:—You will see her full of application, serious, absolute, jealous of her authority, haughty or affable as need may be, reserved, seeming now to capitulate, and then suddenly escaping . . . . . she really loves but two things, authority and gallantry.' And Le Laboureur adds that 'on her husband's death she used both parties, and kept things at a balance, without any support for her authority except her wit and cleverness.' Her inclinations no doubt were with the Guises; she at first sided with them 'under a promise that all should be done by her advice'[1]; they and she were foreigners alike, as too was their powerful ally Mary Stewart; they were all decided Catholics. But she knew that even against the princes of the blood the Guises might become too strong, and determined to balance: her career has been called 'Macchiavellianism put in action,' for she deceived now this side and now that: both avenged themselves by abusing, perhaps by slandering, the ablest woman of their day.

Her highest good fortune lay in her relations with Michel de l'Hôpital, 'one of the greatest men of his time,' as Bayle calls him, and perhaps of any time. In 1560 Jacqueline, Duchess of Montpensier, was her favourite lady in waiting: she even then was a Huguenot, but secretly for fear of her husband, who was a vehement Catholic. De Thou tells us that, seeing the Guises too strong, she advised Catherine to nominate L'Hôpital as Chancellor, and to try to find a sure basis for her policy in the moderation of the law, a great power in France at any time, and not least in such days as those. The Queen Mother happily acted on this advice; and the Auvergnat lawyer became Chan-

[1] Tavannes, Collect. Univ. xxvii p. 18.

cellor of France. He had studied law in Italy, and was a man of great learning, infinite patience, and freedom from partisanship. His mind was pure, cold, logical, and equal. He represented the highest French legal culture, the best that the Parliament could produce. He did not live to see his wise advice successful; he heard from afar the din of the S. Bartholomew massacre, and must have deemed his life's work a failure. Yet it was no failure: he left behind him a school of thought which was the foundation of the party of the 'Politiques,' and led up to the triumph of Henry IV; and in this way laid the foundations of the greatness of France in the most brilliant epoch of her history. It is almost needless to add that the strict Catholics hated a man who was too wise and too great to attach himself to any party: to them the doctrine of toleration (as to many a fanatic of our times) seemed more deadly even than heresy; he was accused, as is usual in such cases, of atheism; the Jesuit-party clamoured for his imprisonment, for his banishment; the influence of the Pope himself was brought to bear on the Court. At last even Catherine, in the time of Charles IX, dreaded his influence; and he was compelled to retire, after having been Chancellor for eight years. Mézeray says of him that 'the integrity of his character, his experience, wisdom in affairs, were acknowledged in all the world; as also his invariable affection towards the good of the state, the defence of the law, the comfort of the people, and his constant courage in resisting the injustice of the great[1].' He lived just long enough to lift up his voice in condemnation of the massacre of S. Bartholomew's Day: Ronsard celebrated his virtues in a classical ode, likening him to the great lawyers of Greece and Rome. Could any one have saved France from civil war, it had been Michel de l'Hôpital. His was a broad, wise forehead, a calm and benevolent countenance; his white hairs and grave dignified manner, and melancholy gentleness in act and speech, won respect and confidence; even the frivolous Brantôme treats his memory with reverence.

[1] Mézeray, Histoire de France, III. p. 296 (ed. 1685).

In the strife of parties the Guises, who had seized on the whole power and government of the state, were at first, as we have said, approved of by Philip of Spain only so far as they represented the strict Catholic party and tended to support that great scheme of repression, which was at this moment being tried in Spain, in the Netherlands, and in Italy, where moderate churchmen, as well as those who had thrown off allegiance to the Papacy, were now undergoing persecution. As time goes on, the fear lest Mary Stewart should become too powerful ceases, and Philip draws towards the French Catholic party; the Jesuits, whose influence rises with the rising tide of the reaction, are borne into France with this foreign movement: they, the Spanish monarchy, and the reformed and reinvigorated Papacy, join hands with the Guises; the days of the League begin. Though at first, the Huguenots, with the malcontent nobles, seemed to be by far the stronger party, when tested by the actual struggle, they were found to have little root in popular sympathy: Antony of Navarre is their weakness; his defection and that of Montmorency are sore blows to them: presently, the massacre of S. Bartholomew's day cuts off their natural leaders, and they are fain to become a mere wing of the army of Moderates.

That great crime was also a great blunder. From that moment the character of the struggle changes: the wars, religious before, now become political: the country recognises the fact that the Leaguers are the anti-national party, resting on foreign support, led by half-foreign chiefs. The Politiques, the moderate Catholics, a purely national party, ready to subordinate their religious to their political feelings, now rise into prominence. The change of feeling and position is somewhat analogous to that of the two parties of the previous century, when the Armagnacs of the South and West gradually came to represent the national feeling, while the Burgundians of the North and East were at last looked on as foreigners. This middle party protect the remaining Huguenots; they make possible a solution of the difficulties of the age by evoking a

sense of patriotism in the country. And lastly, when once they have allied themselves with that great Huguenot chief Henry of Navarre, and when he in turn has accepted their views in Church and State, the civil wars of France come slowly to an end.

When Francis II, an unhealthy feeble youth, slave to his beautiful young wife and her uncles, came to the throne, the air was 'full of cries and sounds and defamatory libels[1].' The Guises treated their rivals with unwise pride: they showed contempt for the Princes of the blood; they persuaded Francis to dismiss them and the Constable with scant courtesy; the trial of Anne du Bourg was pushed on, and he was beheaded; severities began against the Huguenots. The malcontents now made common cause with the Calvinists: the agitation grew and spread. The Huguenots corresponded with Geneva, with the German Princes, with Queen Elizabeth[2]; they consulted the greatest lawyers and theologians as to their right of resistance and conspiracy. Most of these ruled that as the King was manifestly incapable of governing, and was misled by the Guises, the Princes of the blood, 'being born magistrates,' had an inherent right of resistance. It is an early example of the way in which the troubles of this age provoked speculations on the theory of politics. Calvin alone had hopes that by legitimate means the malcontents might gain their point: he warmly condemned the appeal to force. But he was not listened to: they proclaimed that foreign princes had possession of the King, to the exclusion of his kin; they called for the States General, debated as to what was due to the King and what to the people[3], and finally resolved to seize on the King's person. A somewhat obscure gentleman of Perigord, Godfrey du Barri, lord of La Renaudie, whose reputation had suffered from a severe if not an unjust judgment[4] at Dijon, undertook

[1] Tavannes, Collect. Univ. xxvii. pp. 25, 26.

[2] Lingard credits her with originating La Renaudie's conspiracy, but with what authority? History of England, vi. p. 24 (ed. 1855).

[3] Tavannes, Collect. Univ. xxvii. p. 27.

[4] De Thou says (Hist. lib. xxiv. tom. iv. pp. 136, 137) that it was the fault of others rather than his own.

to organise the conspiracy. In February 1560 he called his party together at Nantes: men came from every corner of France; nobles and burghers met, and called themselves a States General: they declared that they desired to do no harm to the young King, only to depose the Guises, who, as they affirmed, were not only crushing 'those of the Religion[1],' but were overthrowing the nobles, and even the royal House. It was agreed that their 'mute captain' should be the Prince of Condé: he was ambitious and resolute, and safer than his feeble brother Antony, who 'whatever he thought to-day, would repent of it to-morrow[2]': Condé should not be compromised, till success was assured. The Châtillons were, apparently, not entangled at all in the affair.

The plans were well laid; La Renaudie was indefatigable: although Philip's agents served him well, and sent him tidings of the plot, the French Court paid little heed to his warnings; the young King lay at Blois, an open place, easy to be surprised. But an advocate, whom La Renaudie had incautiously let into the secret, gave the Court such intelligence as could not be doubted: the King was moved to the safe shelter of the castle at Amboise, his guards doubled, and vigilant watch kept up. The Châtillon brothers were summoned to Court, and cleared themselves by fearlessly coming: they even persuaded the Queen Mother that the severities against the Huguenots ought to be relaxed. The conspirators, however, thought themselves strong enough to venture on their attack, which failed utterly: La Renaudie was killed; the Guises struck hard and sharp; the Loire was choked with corpses. Condé, summoned to Court, offered to clear himself by ordeal of duel, and the Duke of Guise offered to be his second: there was no proof against him, they hesitated to assassinate him; and he returned to Bearn. The Duke of Guise was named Lieutenant-General with unlimited powers, the King in fact delegating all

[1] 'Ceux de la Religion prétendue reformée,' is the full official phrase, as it occurs in the many edicts of the time.

[2] De Thou, Hist. lib. xxvii. (tom. v. p. 71, ed. 1609): 'Qui quod hodie probet cras improbaturus sit.'

his powers to him as a Dictator. The Huguenots loudly declared that the conspiracy had been political, not religious; while on the other hand the Guises professed to see in it nothing but an attack on the Catholic faith. The Chancellor Olivier, who was afraid to resist the cruel vengeance of the Guises, and became the legal instrument of the massacre, took to his bed in agonies of remorse: 'Ah, Cardinal,' he cried to the Cardinal of Lorraine, who came to visit him, 'you have been our perdition': he died with the name of the judicially-murdered Du Bourg on his lips.

Then the Chancellorship, thus vacant, was given by the Queen Mother, with full consent of the Guises, who seem to have mistaken courtesy and suavity for weakness, to Michel de l'Hôpital, who at the time was acting as Chancellor of Margaret of France, Duchess of Savoy. He brought back to France a great reputation for learning and integrity: the device which he afterwards gave to Charles IX,—two columns with the legend 'Pietate et Justitia,'—expresses his character and his principles; by piety and justice, by moderation and fair dealing, he hoped to assuage the angry passions of party, and to give to his country the benefit of the good-will and help of all: toleration and equity should be his means of action. His efforts inevitably failed, when set against the vehemence of either side, the fanaticism of the Catholics, the arrogance of the Huguenots. Could France have listened to his wise voice, she had been spared much suffering, and would have escaped from utter subjection under the royal power. Perhaps the most melancholy element in this great man's life is his fate in being attached to so unprincipled a politician as Catherine: her supple feline policy was a kind of distorted reflexion of his principles: were we only to regard him as having inspired her career, we might conclude that he was a mere waiter upon time, a hand-to-mouth statesman, ever trying to make the best of miserable materials. But L'Hôpital was far greater than his mistress: how great might have been his career, had he been Chancellor of France only a few years later, under the beneficent sway of Henry IV.

His first act as Chancellor was characteristic. By wise advice and judicious yielding, he saved France from the Inquisition, which the Guises, following their natural instincts, wished to introduce after the Amboise plot. In May 1560 the Edict of Romorantin, which the Guises accepted as a compromise instead of the Inquisition, was decreed, and registered in the Parliament of Paris. It enacted that henceforth the Bishops should have exclusive cognisance of heresy. The Chancellor drew it, and interpreted it in such a way that its power of offence was but small. Neither party was much pleased with the result; but the attention of the Guises was called off by affairs at a distance; for Scotland was in the throes of her struggle against their party; the Calvinists, aided by England, now threw off the French and Catholic domination. The immediate result was a lessening of the authority of the Guises; for Mary Stewart could no longer count on Scotland against England: the foreign influence of their party was ruined at one blow, and the old Franco-Scottish alliance snapped at once and for ever. In its farther results the Scottish revolution was a misfortune to France: for it relieved Philip of Spain from all anxiety as to a combination between France, Scotland, and England against him; and so enabled him to interfere more definitely and with greater weight on behalf of the high Catholic party in France during the coming troubles.

Catherine, seeking for some counterpoise to the omnipotence of the Lorraine princes, called an Assembly of Notables at Fontainebleau. Thither came Coligny, and many Protestants; they spoke out boldly and well for their liberties; two bishops, Montluc, Bishop of Valence, and Marillac, Archbishop of Vienne, created a great impression by their moderate counsels; they were hotly accused of Calvinism. Brave was the man who could venture to be moderate in those days! Still their advice was taken, and it was agreed that the States General should meet at Orleans, a national Council should be assembled, and, meanwhile, all punishment of heretics should be suspended. It is said that this threat of a national Council was the true motive

which led to the third and last convocation of the Council of Trent.

When the Estates did meet, the King of Navarre and his brother Condé, who had called for their assembly, were full of misgivings as they came up to Paris; their anxiety was well-founded; Condé was arrested and imprisoned; Antony of Navarre was kept as a prisoner at large. The Guises had proof which, it was said, implicated the Bourbons in a plot formed by the Huguenots to seize Lyons. The Guise party, led by the Cardinal of Lorraine, who had taken every step to secure success by gathering together soldiers from Picardy, Piedmont, Scotland, and others whom they could trust, vehemently pushed on their trial. The scheme they had laid so carefully seemed on the verge of success; the leaders thus stricken down, they would at once crush all the mutinous South, and with full approval of the feeble King, thenceforth rule omnipotent in France. Repression had in fact already begun in Perigord and the Limousin, whither Marshal Thermes had been sent with stringent orders to destroy the Huguenots by martial law. But just at the critical moment Francis sickened. It was whispered that his wretched constitution had given way entirely; the executioner's hand was stayed. The intriguers of both parties waited in awe-stricken truce, till after three or four days' illness the poor King breathed his last. It was a cruel blow to the Lorraine party; the supremacy of the Guises was shattered at the very moment when they seemed about to crown the edifice. They tried to play one last stroke, and offered to Catherine the Regency with ample powers, if she would allow the Bourbons to perish. She, with L'Hôpital at her elbow, was far too well-advised to leave the Lorrainers without any counterpoise. Antony of Navarre, easy-going, friendly man, 'weak from excess of good nature,' as Tavannes says[1], was half-frightened, half-persuaded into an alliance with the Queen Mother, by the terms of which she should have the position of Regent and the real power, while he should succeed to the post of Lieutenant-General

[1] Tavannes, Collect. Univ. xxvii. p. 49.

of the Realm, an office which had been a kind of Dictatorship in the hands of such a Prince as the Duke of Guise, but was not likely to be of more than nominal power when held by one so wavering as Antony, in whose household there were always two parties, pulling in two ways, and in whose heart were many divided counsels. But as yet neither did Catherine call herself Queen Regent, nor Antony Lieutenant-General. The Queen Mother also brought about his reconciliation with the Lorraine princes, who had treated him so ill, had kept him out of that charge of the kingdom, which was due to him as the nearest Prince of the Blood, and had but just now been eagerly pushing on his judicial murder. All parties made a momentary armistice. The aged Anne of Montmorency, the Constable, stupid and honest, and full of the loyalty which marks the heavy guardsman, an excellent drill-sergeant, a miserable general, professed on his knees with tears in his eyes his devotion to his new sovereign. Condé was released from prison, though he was still regarded as on his trial, and was sent away into Picardy; the Guises nominally retained much of their power, though the finances were undertaken by the Privy Council. 'To an imaginary majority,' as men said, 'had succeeded a real minority.' Charles IX was but ten years and a half old; it was no longer possible to carry on the government under a 'roi fainéant': there must be some Regent, a recognised and real power. Antony, who ought to have held this all-important post, let himself be frightened out of it. In vain did the Huguenots urge him to seize the reins of Government; in vain Calvin, with all the weight of his great authority, besought him to act vigorously; he was listened to as little now as when he had tried to dissuade them from the rash attempt of Amboise.

The position of parties now somewhat changes. The three discontented groups,—that is, the Princes of the Blood, the Constable and his friends, who had been pushed aside when Francis II came to the throne, and the Huguenots,—were now no longer united. Montmorency returned to court, and, as a strong Catholic and royalist, soon fell away from the others;

the Princes of the Blood were rather fearful of committing themselves too closely to the Huguenot party.

On the other hand, the Guises felt their footing to be insecure; they had seen their schemes suddenly shattered, and scarcely knew what step they next should take. There remained the Queen Mother and L'Hôpital, who drew towards Montmorency, now head of the war-power, and made, as we have seen, a compact with the King of Navarre. The question for the country was,—Can this triumvirate, Catherine, Antony of Bourbon, and Montmorency, hold its own, and govern France moderately and peacefully, between Huguenots, who clamour for freedom of worship and opinion, and the Lorraine-party, who are fanatically eager to crush them? Mary Stewart, whose footing in France became precarious from the moment of her husband's death, was forced, in 1561, much against her will, to set sail again for Scotland. She was but eighteen years old; all her ambitions, sympathies, happiness, were centred in the land of her adoption; she shuddered when she thought of the raw climate, the rigid moral code, the fierce Calvinism of her realm; she saw herself surrounded by angry parties, or ruled by the iron rod of John Knox: a gloomy prospect for one who loved the gay licence of sunny France. As her ship sailed out to sea, the sad young Queen, scarcely able to see through her tears, leant over the bulwark, murmuring, 'Adieu, France,' with a broken voice, till the blue shore slowly faded from her sight. Her instincts told her true: she was bidding farewell for ever to peace; henceforth her lot would be a life of intrigue and crime, leading on to long years of prison, and the scaffold at the end.

The discourse which L'Hôpital pronounced at the opening of the States General well expresses the aims which the central party set before it. His wise and temperate sentiments, the gravity of his manner and of the occasion; his declaration of the importance of the royal power; his appeals to the States General 'not to give up the name of Christian for the devil's titles of Lutheran, Huguenot, Papist, names of party and sedition[1];'

[1] 'His ab hoste generis humani cogitatis Lutheranorum, Hugonotorum

his exhortation to the good towns to repress all lawlessness and disturbance; his glance at the pitiable state of the King's purse, which was a side stroke at the Cardinal of Lorraine;—all these things, duly listened to and pondered, might, had there been more love of country and less bitter partisanship, have saved France from the terrible misfortunes of this disastrous reign. And at first these counsels seemed likely to prevail: the Estates of Orleans recognised the evils dominant in the Church, the confusion in the finances, the bad state of commerce and agriculture: on the very day on which the States General ceased to sit (31st Jan. 1561), appeared the Edict of Orleans, which embodied, in a moderate form, the reforms demanded by the Third Estate. But the Parliament of Paris, that stronghold of the lawyers, seeing that some of the most valuable reforms were directed against legal abuses, resisted violently, and refused to register the Ordinance; while the Huguenots for their part were dissatisfied and restless.

Intrigues fill up a dreary time; these are the days in which Catherine tried her new plan of management, and called into action 'the Queen's flying squadron.' By this means she secured the King of Navarre, who had been busy with a scheme for overthrowing the Guises. The Queen Mother would no more let him destroy the Guises than, a few months before, she had allowed them to crush the Bourbon Princes. The Bourbons had threatened, if the Lorrainers were not banished, to withdraw from Court, declaring that they would then march on Paris, and make the Parliament proclaim the King of Navarre Regent of the Realm. Montmorency, Antony, Condé, the Châtillons, and the leading nobles of the Court, were preparing to carry out their threat by sending forward baggage and servants, when Catherine skilfully stopped the Constable, by making the child-King command him on his loyalty not to desert him; the honest old man bowed his head and obeyed. She then entangled the King of Navarre, amusing him with a silly love-affair; the crisis passed by, and the whole party remained at Court.

et Papanorum vocabulis, ac specioso Christianorum nomine retento.' De Thou, Hist. lib. xxvii. (tom. v. p. 12, ed. 1609).

The fluctuations of parties soon began again: Montmorency was shocked by the audacity and opinions of the Huguenots. He was also angered at hearing that it was proposed, in the interests of economy, to withdraw the ruinous gifts made to the leading favourites of the last two Kings; for he had received great wealth from Henry II, and here his interests were at one with those of the Guises, who had shamelessly plundered the realm. Consequently he drew gradually towards them, and before long had entirely changed sides. The influence of his son, the Marshal Montmorency, and of his nephews, the Châtillons, was powerless against the old man's prejudices, when ably played on by his former comrade the Marshal S. André, and fanned by the still more influential favourite Diana of Poitiers, and by the strong likes and dislikes of his wife, who hated the nephews. The upshot of it was the fatal Triumvirate of 1561. On Easter Day the agreement was solemnly made between Francis, Duke of Guise, the Constable, and S. André. The Queen Mother, seeing that the balance was endangered, drew more towards the Châtillons and Bourbons.

Then first sprang up serious rumours of a Catholic League, to support this Triumvirate. We find the name used as an entirely established term in 1562: 'Her Majesty,' says Prosper de Sainte-Croix[1], 'is going towards Blois, so as to be nearer the Huguenot forces, because she fancies they will be able to counterbalance those of the League.' Philip II of Spain was indicated as its recognised head; his influence should gain over the King of Navarre; the Emperor should be urged to coerce the German Protestants on the French border; the Italian

[1] March 15, 1562; Cimber et Danjou, I. vi. p. 54. There is no explanation of the word, it is simply 'ceux de la Ligue.' By that time Antony of Bourbon was leagued with the Guises and the Spanish party. Still 'the League' proper is not definitely established till several years later. Prosper de Sainte-Croix was Bishop of Chisamo and Nuncio of Pius IV at the French Court from 1561 to 1565. His letters addressed to Carlo Borromeo are a most interesting expression of the ideas, aims, and partisan proceedings of the High Catholic party, of which the great and sainted Cardinal Archbishop of Milan was a violent and cruel supporter.

Princes should threaten the spiritual capital of Calvinism, Geneva. Parties henceforth are simplified. On the one side stand the Triumvirs with the strong Catholics; on the other the Châtillons with the Huguenots and the discontented nobles. The Queen Mother, with alarm, saw herself powerless between them. Daily disturbances broke out: partisan feeling grew more and more embittered: the Edict of July, the result of hot debates in the Parliament of Paris, expressed the decision come to by a majority of only three votes [1], and ran thus, 'those only should be condemned to death who took part in heretical assemblies, and that all others suspected of simple heresy should be handed over to the ecclesiastical tribunals.'

This Edict, to the delight of the Duke of Guise, who boasted that to give it effect his sword would leap from its scabbard, was a severe blow to the Huguenots, who were demanding the right of freedom to hold services and to preach. Throughout this period the efforts of the High Catholic party were concentrated on the effort to forbid liberty of preaching. The pulpit seems to have had an influence in France far beyond anything known to us: the hereditary Gallic love of oratory may, in part at least, be the cause. The Catholic party seem to have thought that freedom of speech granted to 'those of the Religion' would be fatal; that all men would be led astray by the preachers: they were as yet far from the greater sagacity of the Jesuits, who soon learnt to meet eloquence with eloquence, fervour with fervour, and who became masters in the school of logic and controversy [2].

No sooner was the Edict of July launched, than the Chancellor sought to modify it by convoking the States General at Pontoise: the deputies of the Noblesse and the Third Estate were almost to a man either moderates or Huguenots: they rallied round the Queen Mother, and gave her the title of Regent as well as the substantive power; they claimed biennial meetings of the States; abolished the Edict of July; called for

[1] Some accounts say seven.

[2] Prosper de Sainte-Croix always urges this repression of the conventicles as the one remedy for the dangers of the time.

a reform of clergy, freedom of worship for the Huguenots, and many other changes; above all they demanded the exclusion of the Lorraine Princes and the Cardinals from the Council. A colloquy was also held at Poissy to deal with religious matters: the Regent had been so successful at Pontoise that she hoped by prudence and management to conciliate the two great parties: it was a great step for the Huguenots to find themselves treated for the first time as on an equality with the Catholics[1]: Beza, their chief speaker, made a deep impression by his eloquence: and for the moment things seemed to look well for them; but the other party, ably backed by Lainez, the General of the Jesuits, threw matters into confusion, and the assembly, after much wrangling, was dissolved.

These things did but irritate the Catholics, while they also raised still higher the arrogance of the nobles and Huguenots. The Guises withdrew for a time, to mark their disapproval of the course the Regent was following: Philip of Spain declared his high displeasure, and hinted that he was ready to interfere: the King of Navarre, dissatisfied with his ally Catherine, and seeing that he had only nominal power,—still more allured by the 'entertainment of hopes[2]' dangled before him by Philip, who suggested to him, as a mere bait, Sardinia in lieu of his lost kingdom of Navarre[3],—now abandoned his old friends and joined the Triumvirs: it was a great and damaging blow to the moderates. These, guided by L'Hôpital and the Queen Regent, next placed their hopes in the convocation of an extraordinary assembly at S. Germains. The Chancellor selected from the eight Parliaments of the realm those presidents and counsellors whom he knew to be most decidedly moderate in opinions: to these were added the King's Privy Council: thus secure of a strong majority, he ventured, in his opening address, to point

[1] De Thou, Hist. lib. xxviii. (tom. v. p. 125).

[2] 'Entretenerlo con esperanças,' says Granvella, 15 Dec. 1561. Quoted by von Ranke, Franz. Geschichte, i. p. 177.

[3] We see from the letters of Prosper de Sainte-Croix (Cimber et Danjou, I. vi. pp. 10, 11) how entirely the weak King of Navarre was led by the hope of restoration in Navarre, or indemnification elsewhere: this is the clue to his policy, and this eventually proved his ruin.

out to the assembly that the two institutions, Church and State, need not absolutely be coincident: 'many,' he said, 'may be citizens, who are not even Christians:' he urged them to remember that their work was to settle the bases not of religion but of the body politic; he prayed them to support the King as one who stands between and above parties. These addresses of L'Hôpital are among the most remarkable state-papers of the age, though the truths they eloquently express were far from being accepted or acceptable; they belonged to a far later time, and, in fact, have not yet come to be fully understood in Europe. France, in the person of one who was perhaps her wisest statesman, has the honour of having first proclaimed those doctrines of toleration and civic equality before the law, round which so many deadly wars have been waged; the simplicity and justice of his views have been but slowly and reluctantly recognised even in our days.

The Assembly of S. Germain drew up and promulgated a new Edict, which came to be called the 'Edict of January' (1562): the exercise of Protestant worship was allowed in the open country, though it was forbidden in towns; all penalties to which heretics were liable were suspended; the Huguenots were ordered not to disturb the ancient worship in any way: in a word, the Edict preached a fair and equal tolerance, guaranteeing, however, to the old Faith, as possessor of the ground, its churches, lands, forms and ornaments of worship, and the sole possession of the closed towns of France. The Edict is specially notable for this, that it is the first occasion on which the Huguenots received formal recognition by the State; and had they been more prudent, it might have been a great epoch in their history.

Unfortunately there are moments in the history of a state when nothing seems so ill-timed as moderation and justice. The Huguenots refused to listen to that part of the Edict which bade them respect their neighbours' faith: they deemed their battle won, and fell with fierce joy on their antagonists, attacking their churches, breaking images, throwing open convents,

insulting the warmest feelings and convictions of the Catholic party. The Catholics, for their part, were equally determined never to allow the earlier part of the Edict to pass into use in France. Paris was the scene of grave disturbances: Condé, with a troop of four hundred gentlemen, with insulting bravery, escorted the Huguenot ministers through the angry streets to their place of meeting at Charenton: the lesser cities saw similar scenes; and not without bloodshed.

These three assemblies, the States General of Pontoise, the Colloquy of Poissy, and the Council at S. Germain, all under the guidance and inspiration of L'Hôpital, are the nearest approach that France, in these earlier days, could make to constitutional life: they fell on evil times; they were not sufficiently representative, nor were the parties in the country willing of their own accord to bow to their decision, nor indeed had the moderate party at Court sufficient strength to enforce their decisions when they appeared. The fair show of discussion in the State, in the Church, in the hands of the representatives of the Parliaments, only tended to aggravate the evils of the time; it did but lead to the outbreak of the civil wars. To show how little hope there was, it is perhaps almost enough to quote the advice given by Prosper de Sainte-Croix at this moment: he is speaking to Catherine and the King of Navarre of the Estates at Pontoise: 'We represented how necessary it was that the Regent should reserve to herself the right of forming, at her own will, the final judgment; seeing that it was not suitable that her Majesty should allow the introduction of the custom of obliging herself to do whatever those folk there might set forth and conclude: their Majesties at once assented.'

The Duke of Guise had withdrawn to the East, and had even gone out of France into Alsace to persuade the Lutheran princes of Germany to stand aloof, by arousing their dislike to the Calvinistic tenets dominant in France, and by himself professing a leaning towards the consubstantialist theology; he was now called back by his partisans in Paris, who judged that their time was come. For Catholic opinion was profoundly irritated:

the defection of the King of Navarre had greatly weakened the other party; and finally offers of help came in from every quarter: 'in case of need,' said Prosper de Sainte-Croix[1], 'we offered him (the French King), I for the Pope, and the Ambassador for Spain, all the forces of our masters, for the service of God and preservation of our religion.'

The Duke of Guise, receiving his summons, left Joinville with his brother the Cardinal and two hundred gentlemen; and on a Sunday (1 March, 1562) rode into the little town of Vassy[2], where a detachment of his men were to meet him. Here, by favour of the Bishop of Troyes, who was friendly to the Huguenots, a Calvinist church had been established, and service held in a large granary. As Guise rode up to the town, he heard the ringing of a bell; and when the people round him were told it was to call together the Protestants to worship, they went off noisily to disturb them: first they called them names, then threw stones[3] at them; then some horsemen broke the doors down, and attacked the congregation with drawn swords, 'then arose a shrieking of women, children, and the unarmed crowd; a vast confusion of those who ran hither and thither to find escape; others climbed to the crossbeams of the roof, and pulling away the tiles, got outside, only to be picked off by gunshot or stones; at last tidings came to Anne Duchess of Guise, who was supposed to be not unfriendly to the Protestants, and she sent to beseech her husband to appease the tumult. He had already ridden up: but at the granary door he was struck on the face by a chance stone which drew blood, and his followers, glad of an excuse, rushed in, smiting right and left. In vain the Duke with threats and prayers tried to stop them: their tiger-nature was aroused by blood; nor did they pause till all had either perished or fled. The place was utterly wrecked, the pulpit pulled down, the French bibles torn in pieces; some neighbouring houses plundered.

[1] 15 Jan. 1562, Cimber et Danjou, I. vi. p. 26.

[2] Vassy is on the frontiers of Champagne, no great distance from Joinville.

[3] So says De Thou, whom I follow here. Hist. lib. xxix (tom. v. p. 204, ed. 1609): 'Saxorum a lixis, ut fit, vibratorum grando consecuta est.'

This lamentable massacre was the prelude to the long civil wars. A shout of execration arose against the Duke of Guise, a man by no means savage or fond of blood, who had done his best to stop the tumult, and was in no way responsible for it. Beza stigmatised him as the 'murderer of the human race;' the excited and pent-up feelings of the Huguenots were aflame at once; the efforts of the Queen Mother and L'Hôpital to still the discord were fruitless; the civil wars began.

CHAPTER III.

The Civil Wars. First Period.

A.D. 1562–1570.

The civil wars, which we shall not follow in detail, linger on till long after the accession of Henry IV. The Edict of Nantes and the Peace of Vervins (April and May, 1598) are the two monumental columns which mark the end and boundary of this dreary waste, and secure that compromise between parties which is expressed in the career and character of the first Bourbon King.

We may divide the time into three periods; 1. the civil wars before the League was actually formed (1562–1570); 2. the stormy transition-period of the S. Bartholomew Massacre (1570–1573); and 3. the wars in which the League fought against the Politique-party (1574–1598). In the earlier time the struggle is between Catholic and Huguenot; the latter being looked on as unpatriotic; for they rest on foreign aid, and seem to prefer their own aims and objects before the welfare of the nation: in the last period the Huguenots became comparatively unimportant, and the struggle is carried on by the moderates, or 'Politiques' as they were called, who though mostly Catholics are in favour of toleration and become the national party, while the Leaguers, in their turn, depend on foreign aid.

I. The first Period (1562–1570) contains:—

1. The first war, beginning soon after the Vassy massacre,

which was closed early in 1563 by the Pacification of Amboise.

2. The second war, following after a brief interval of quiet, and occupying the two years 1567 and 1568, was ended by the Peace of Longjumeau, which re-established the Amboise Edict.

3. The third war(in reality little but a continuation of the second) running from 1568 to 1570, ended by the Peace of S. Germain, in which the Huguenots, in spite of their reverses, got very good terms.

II. The middle Period (1570–1573):—

4. After the startling interlude of the Massacre of S. Bartholomew's Day, which had been preceded by a short peace, the fourth war breaks out, and centres round La Rochelle; the 'third party,' that of the 'Politiques,' now beginning to appear, and by their influence the Peace of La Rochelle is signed in 1573.

III. The last Period (1574–1598):—

1. The very next year Charles IX dies (1574), war having just broken out again; the Huguenots, who have become less vigorous and independent, fight under the banner of the Politique-party, headed by the Duke of Alençon, youngest son of Henry II. In 1576 the Peace of Chastenoy—'la paix de Monsieur'—gives the high Catholic party time to consolidate its new League.

2. In 1577 there are hostilities in Poitou, which scarcely deserve to be called war; in the autumn the Peace of Bergerac closes the strife.

3. In 1579 another obscure partisan-war breaks out, varied in its interest by the question of the Netherlands, which attracts Alençon (or Anjou as he is now called). The peace of Fleix, as obscure as the war, follows. Anjou dies in 1584, and Henry of Navarre becomes heir to the French throne.

4. This entirely changes the character of the warfare, which breaks out again in 1585. It is now completely political; it is led by one great captain and several considerable chiefs, and being felt to be the supreme struggle between the parties, lasts ten weary years. This war in its course ceases to be mere civil strife, and becomes European: the Duke of Mayenne and the chief outstanding nobles come over to Henry IV, as also do the principal cities, in 1594; the Jesuits, the moving spirits of the resistance to him, are expelled from France. War goes on with Spain four years longer, until in 1598 the Peace of Vervins closes the whole period.

I. *The First War*, 1562–1563.

Though Paris welcomed the tidings of the Vassy massacre with a shout of joy, the Catholic party generally was but ill-prepared for war. The clergy, and above all the Jesuits, beat the war-drum without stint[1]; yet at the outset they seemed likely to be overwhelmed. The Huguenots were eager to fight: 'We shall never be friends,' cried D'Andelot, 'till we have had a few fencing-bouts together:' and Beza threw aside all moderation: 'I speak,' cried he to the King of Navarre,—who was certainly aggravating,—'for a Faith which is better skilled in suffering than in revenging wrong; but remember, Sire, that 'tis an anvil on which many a hammer has been broken in pieces[2].' There arose in them a mixed sentiment, in which religious exaltation, feudal independence, and republicanism, were combined; in cities like La Rochelle it took a civic or even democratic tone, while among the nobles of southern France it was proud and aristocratic.

The Queen and Chancellor at Fontainebleau were stricken with dismay when they heard of the outbreak at Vassy. They forbade the Duke of Guise to continue his journey; he paid

[1] La Vallée, Histoire de France, ii. p. 423.
[2] Anquetil, Esprit de la Ligue, i. p. 136.

no heed to their orders, and entered Paris with amazing pomp, as if he had been a king. The Queen also ordered Condé to leave Paris, with a view of avoiding an explosion, and he obeyed, directing his steps to Meaux, where he was joined by Admiral Coligny. With fifteen hundred horsemen they hastened down to Fontainebleau, intending to carry off the little King and the Regent, a sudden stroke which Catherine would gladly have welcomed in her despair. But the Guises were too quick; when Condé reached Fontainebleau he found that they had already been there, and had escorted the young King to Paris; telling the Queen Regent that she might follow, or return to Italy, as she thought best. In tears, and deeply mortified, fearful for her personal safety, Catherine followed the Triumvirs to Paris.

Foiled in his great stroke Condé promptly repaired it by another attempt, which proved successful. He marched quickly down to Orleans, and seized that important city, the bridge for him between Northern and Southern France, the point also from which Paris might be observed and menaced, and through which communications could be kept up with the German Protestants, when they came in by Lorraine.

Both parties looked abroad for help. The Guises appealed to the Pope and the Spanish King, who sent six thousand seasoned troops into Guienne. Condé negociated with the German Princes, and signed a treaty with Queen Elizabeth (20 Sept. 1562)[1]. This document, which is interesting, first alludes to the massacre of Vassy; and then stipulates that English troops should occupy Havre, Dieppe, and Rouen; a triangle with its base on the sea, and apex stretching up towards Paris; it answered to the strong wedge with which Henry V of England had sought to rive the French kingdom asunder, except that the base line then stretched from Calais to the Seine-mouth, and the apex was Paris[2]. The English treaty alludes also to the proposed help from Germany,

[1] Dumont, Recueil de Traités, v. p. 94.
[2] See Vol. i. p. 515.

especially from the Elector Palatine, whose sympathies had now become Calvinistic. Under this treaty, Queen Elizabeth sent over three thousand men and garrisoned Havre, accepting it as in exchange for Calais.

The Huguenot party seized town after town; over two hundred places fell into their hands; the Catholics were surprised and made but a poor resistance. Rouen and the course of the Seine below it, the Loire from Orleans, some towns on the Saone, Lyons, and many cities of the South, fell into their hands. Their spirits rose with every step: they hoped soon to be masters of the country. An attempt was made by the Queen Mother to reconcile the two Bourbon brothers, Antony King of Navarre, who on the Catholic side was at the head of a considerable force threatening Orleans, and Condé, who with an equal force had marched towards Paris; she failed, and the Huguenots heard with cries of joy that her offers had been rejected: religious enthusiasm, combined with an aristocratic pride in the trade of war, seemed likely to overbear all opposition.

Yet the very opening of hostilities showed them how much they had deceived themselves. The bulk of the French people were entirely opposed to them: and much as they might despise the mob, when it came to actual civil war, they were but a handful against a nation. At the very first stroke the Catholics recovered Blois, Tours, Angers, the whole course of the lower Loire: the Huguenots' hold on the Seine was endangered at once; Touraine, Anjou, Berry, Poitou, Saintonge were all speedily reduced. Wherever the Protestants prevailed, images were broken, old monuments ruined, monasteries sacked, altars desecrated; Christian art, so rich in France, received a sore blow; no difference was made between religious and other statues; the famous copper image of Louis XI was broken, and the King's bones burnt: the tombs of William the Conqueror and Matilda were destroyed: the Rhone and the Loire received the remains of S. Irenaeus and S. Martin of Tours: even the statue of Jeanne Darc on

the bridge of Orleans was overthrown. But their fury at first spent itself on things, not on men: while the vengeance of the Catholic party was wreaked on human beings; cruelties of every kind, wholesale executions, fire and sword, marking the progress of their arms: the example could not but be imitated by the other party; gradually, yet all too fast, the war took the natural colour of civil strife. On the one side the Baron des Adrets filled Dauphiny with the cries of the Catholics: on the other side, any one who reads 'The Soldier's Bible,' the Memoirs of Montluc, may see for himself with what brutal barbarism the war of Frenchman against Frenchman could be carried on. The Spanish veterans specially distinguished themselves by their savageness: and all in the name of Christ. 'In this war,' says Castelnau[1], 'the arms taken up to defend religion ended by annihilating it.'

The North and centre of France were strongly Catholic, as also was Provence: but the South and South-west side of the country, as well as Dauphiny, where the mountains still sheltered the Vaudois, were as warmly inclined to the Huguenot cause. The Catholic party was far stronger than its antagonists: of the many cities seized at the outset by the Huguenots all had been speedily recovered, except Rouen and Orleans in the North, with three or four lesser places, and a few towns in the South. The English at Havre rendered Rouen very formidable to the Catholic party: the threat of German interference made Orleans almost as dangerous: it was all-important that these places should be reduced. In Orleans lay Condé himself; Rouen was defended by Montgomery. As the danger from the latter place was the more pressing, the King of Navarre was at once sent thither to besiege it, and the Queen Regent accompanied him. Montgomery, who had already slain one King[2], now was fated to have a part in the death of another; for Antony of Navarre was wounded in an attack: the physicians thought little of the wound; but whether from his folly and self-indulgence, or from bad treatment or

[1] Castelnau, Bk. V, ch. i. [2] See above, p. 292.

ill-health, the hurt instead of healing grew worse, and he died. 'He passed into the tomb, still flattering himself with the hopes raised by the King of Spain; he counted still on a kingdom of Sardinia; thus as he chatted with those round his bed he fancied he would spend a merry life, free from the storms of war, where the pomegranate, the jessamine, and the orange groves mingled cool shade with sweet perfume, by the side of rivers whose sands were gold[1].' His spouse Jeanne d'Albret, warmly devoted to the Huguenot cause, had quitted the Court for her estates when her husband fell back into the hands of the Catholics: there she busied herself with the education of the bright and sprightly boy, the little Henry of Navarre, destined to high fortunes, who even in childhood showed unusual gifts of body and mind. Antony's death made this child, now nine years old, his heir and a possible heir to the throne of France. So ended the poor career of this weak monarch, who could not abandon his pleasures even to save his life; who changed sides lightly and carelessly; who endowed his son with those faults which flecked the nobility of his character, and robbed him of his right to the name of the Great.

Before he died Rouen had fallen after a gallant defence: Montgomery escaped down the river to Havre, which, with its English garrison, alone held out on the Seine: Rouen was pitilessly sacked and pillaged; legal executions followed cruelties of war; the place was well-nigh ruined. The only large cities now remaining in Huguenot hands were Lyons and Orleans: of these the latter was at once threatened. Condé, who commanded there, looked for help from the South of France and from the German frontier; but his friends from the South were repulsed and scattered by Montluc: to Germany he had despatched D'Andelot to gather forces, and about seven thousand men, levied by the Elector Palatine and in Saxony and Hesse, with pay found by Queen Elizabeth, crossed the frontier and joined Condé at Orleans. Then he felt himself

[1] Anquetil, Esprit de la Ligue, i. p. 172.

strong enough to march northwards.' An attempt on Corbeil failed; but he was not opposed in the open field, and came even as far as the faubourgs of Paris. A strong force of Spaniards and Gascons were now thrown into the capital, and Condé, too weak to besiege the town, turned to the west, proposing to meet the English troops who were expected shortly to land at Havre.

The Queen-Regent sent out an army in pursuit: Condé was overtaken at Dreux by Montmorency the Constable, under whom the Duke of Guise condescended to serve; and on Dec. 19, 1562, the first battle of the Civil Wars took place. It was a long and equal struggle, for if the Catholic party were stronger in foot-soldiers, the noble Huguenots, as was usually the case, had a decided preponderance in horse; the cavalry of the French noblesse was in these wars often pitted against the infantry of Spain and of the Catholic cities. The battle resulted in the defeat of the nobles, after heroic resistance. It was a singular fact that the commanders-in-chief of both armies were taken prisoners: Condé fell into the Duke of Guise's hands, and Montmorency was carried off by the Huguenot horse. The Marshal St. André perished, as did also the young Duke of Nevers. Coligny, ever greatest in defeat, drew off the beaten Huguenots in excellent order, with artillery and cavalry. He was named general-in-chief in the absence of Condé, and fell back to the south beyond the Loire. On the other side, the Duke of Guise, alone of the Triumvirs, remained at the head of affairs.

Coligny, feeling the need of English support, presently left Orleans with his cavalry, and rode towards the north-west: Guise saw his going with delight, and left him free, while he brought up all his forces to besiege the town, which commanded the critical passage over the Loire. In spite of D'Andelot's efforts, the south side of the city fell at once[1]; and the Duke of Guise pushed on to attack the islands on which the bridge of Orleans rests. Just however as all was ready for the

[1] See Map, Vol. I, p. 519.

assault, just as the hearts of the defenders were sinking low—for they were dispirited, weakened by pestilence, cut off from all aid, and without tidings of Coligny — the Duke was treacherously shot down by a Huguenot assassin, Poltrot, a gentleman from the Anjou country. He lingered a few days, gave good advice to Catherine, beseeching her to use moderation and to restore peace to France; he also once more protested that he was guiltless, as indeed he was, of the Vassy bloodshed, and then made a tranquil end. The death of Francis of Guise was a mishap for France: for he was a statesman, and not averse to moderate counsels; both he and his brother the Cardinal were inclined to recognise the need of some reform in the Church; some members of his family were not unfriendly towards the Huguenots. If the civil war could have been cleared of its political elements, if the rivalry of Bourbons and Guises could have been allayed, a moderate settlement of the Huguenot grievances might have been come to by the mediation of such men as Francis of Guise, L'Hôpital, and Coligny, all acting under the friendly eye of Catherine de' Medici.

The heads of the Catholic party were gone: the Queen Mother could now hope once more to rule indeed, for the ambition of the Lorraine princes was no longer to be feared. The Huguenots, accomplices after the fact, rejoiced at the fall of their most formidable enemy. Beza, who denied that he had urged Poltrot to commit the crime, still regarded the Duke's death as a just judgment of God; even Coligny himself confessed that he thought it a subject for anything but regret.

The face of affairs thus changed, Catherine again began to negociate, and this time with great hopes of success. The Catholics were paralysed, the Huguenots disheartened; no one had any money; all France was ravaged and spoiled. The two prisoners, Condé and Montmorency, were consulted; each gave way somewhat; and the Edict of Amboise (19 March, 1563) closed the war. The Calvinists were allowed free exercise of their religion in those cities which were in their

hands; the liberty of preaching in the open country was limited: in each Bailliage, under immediate jurisdiction of the Parliaments, one town was granted them in which their worship should be free. Condé and his followers were declared loyal subjects. The Admiral was vexed; he had still a fine force at his command, and, the Duke of Guise being dead, had hoped to accomplish something great for his party: but his influence could not delay the peace, though his discontent prepared for future war. The Calvinists abandoned Orleans: the German 'reiters' were sent home: Lyons was given up: in August the English were forced to retire from Havre. The young King Charles IX was declared by the Parliament of Rouen to have attained his majority: the Regent gave him excellent advice, which was not followed. The boy was now thirteen; lively, fond of active exercise, delighting in war and hunting; tall, graceful, dignified, sensitive and intelligent; liable however to fits of anger, and easily led. Unfortunately he was surrounded by courtiers whose guidance could only be bad.

This same year was marked by the close of the Council of Trent: all hope of reuniting Protestants and Catholics had long been abandoned; and the Council had become a Council of the Latin races only; the union of the southern kingdoms for the support of the papacy was assured, and Rome took up her new position as capital of a narrower but far more compact spiritual empire. We are told that just before the Council was dispersed, the Cardinal of Lorraine, whose influence there had been very great, sketched out the first formal outline of the great League of the future: it was to be headed by Philip II, blessed by the Pope, Pius IV, and supported by the whole Catholic party in France, headed by the Guises[1].

More than three quiet years ensued, which were little but a truce; neither party was satisfied. Where the Huguenots were strong, the Edict of Amboise was obeyed: in Catholic parts it was defied, and the Calvinists insulted; murders were rife, the law courts gave them no redress; the Court regarded them as

[1] L. von Ranke, Päpste, Bk. III, § 6.

bad subjects, and too weak to be treated with respect: even Condé himself seemed to forget his old leadership; the little well-built Prince, with his bright eyes and open frank face, his lively ways and Frenchman's gallantry, was flattered by the Queen Mother, and allured by the pleasures of the Court, till he left the Huguenots to grumble as they would. The ambassadors of the Catholic powers hastened to urge Catherine to receive the Tridentine decrees in France, and to undertake the pitiless extirpation of heresy, and the revocation of all favourable edicts.

The Court, having disposed of these fanatical advisers with civil words, set forth on a progress through the East and South of France. The Queen Mother, with the young King and Henry of Navarre in her train, first visited Lorraine: there she tried to get from the neighbouring German princes an assurance that they would not interfere in French affairs: she learnt on the contrary that they were only too ready to take part on either side when the moment came: thence she passed through Burgundy, thence to the South: edicts still further reducing the liberties of the Huguenots and augmenting their discontent were issued. On the Savoyard frontier the Duke of Savoy visited her: at Avignon the Queen Mother was received by a special envoy from the Pope: farther on, the gay progress passed through the disaffected South: the stern and irritated Huguenots saw with anger the frivolous manners and debaucheries of the Court. Steps were taken to bridle the disaffected; citadels built to the chief towns; suspected governors removed; new edicts issued.

At Bayonne the Court was met by the Queen of Spain, Elizabeth, the King's sister, that charming French princess round whose memory hangs a sad halo of mystery; for, destined for Don Carlos, and then transferred to his father Philip, she seems in some quite unexplained way to have been connected with the untimely death of the heir to the throne. It was a great change for the poor lady, to find herself once more in the midst of balls and fêtes, and a thousand pleasant distrac-

tions, after Philip's gloomy court. She was attended by the Duke of Alva, who did his utmost to urge Catherine to take severer measures with the Huguenots. The Duke of Montpensier, the grim soldier Montluc, the Cardinal of Guise, all supported his views: they would have liked to see L'Hôpital dismissed, the policy of moderation abandoned, the heretics crushed. But Catherine was not likely to hand herself over entirely to them, or to take steps which must inevitably lead to war: the young King expressed his horror at Alva's proposals: the Queen Mother suggested a National Council, before which the Tridentine Decrees should be brought. Alva could do no more than make his ground sure with the high Catholic nobles at Court: decidedly Catholic as Catherine was, she would never become the mere puppet of a party: it is absurd to believe, as some have said, that the Massacre of S. Bartholomew's Day was planned and agreed on at Bayonne.

The Huguenots, alarmed by the edicts, the citadels, the general tendency to restore Catholicism in the South, and the manifest preferences of the King, distrusting also the Queen Mother, and her colloquies with their terrible enemy Alva, stood on their guard, menacing war.

An Assembly of Notables held at Moulins in 1566, under the influence of the Chancellor, confirmed all the steps taken by Catherine in the direction of good government during these tranquil years; and these steps had not been few; though they were chiefly legal or administrative, such as the simplification of trials, establishment of commercial tribunals, ordering the beginning of the year to date from the 1st of January instead of from Easter, and other practical matters. The Ordinance or Edict of Moulins formed the basis of the judicial code of France down to the time of the Revolution; the crowning act of the Assembly was the outward reconciliation of the Guises and the Châtillons.

Yet true peace was as far off as ever: assassinations went on; a pamphlet-war raged: the Queen Mother herself was threatened with the fate of the Duke of Guise; associations

sprang up, brotherhoods, local leagues in which men banded themselves together to resist the Huguenots; all things were drifting ominously, if silently, towards a catastrophe. Though Catherine was cautious, and conciliatory with the Protestant leaders, Charles IX could not restrain his dislike for them: 'A while ago,' he said to the Admiral, 'you were content to be allowed by the Catholics to exist: now you demand to be their equals: soon you will want to be above, and to drive us all from the Realm[1]': and again he added, speaking to the Queen, that he at last 'believed Alva was right;—their heads were too high.' The Calvinists had also urged the Protestant princes of Germany to send an embassy to intercede for them with the King: Charles dismissed them with a recommendation to cease meddling with matters that did not concern them, and to practise at home what they preached to him abroad, by allowing the Catholics to enjoy free worship in their own cities,—a rejoinder to which the abashed Lutherans had no reply to make[2].

Things went on from bad to worse: the Huguenots threatened the Queen Mother's life, while she laid her plans to crush them quietly, by dispersing their meetings and armies, and even by assassination. Though she was far from desiring the coarse violence of the Massacre, she was still quite ready for a well-directed scheme of murders, which might destroy all the heads of the party, and leave them powerless.

II. *Second War.* A.D. 1567–1568.

So things stood, when foreign news brought about an explosion. Affairs in Scotland had gone ill for Queen Mary: her strange career of misfortune and crime reached in these years

[1] Davila, iv. p. 158, quoted by Anquetil, Esprit de la Ligue, i. 239.

[2] The Peace of Augsburg (1555), by the principle expressed in the well-known formula 'Cujus regio, ejus religio,' had entirely closed the door against religious toleration, by giving equal power of intolerant exclusion to Catholics and Lutherans, which they exercised alike against all dissidents.

a dramatic height: in 1566 Rizzio was barbarously murdered before her eyes: early in 1567 Darnley was blown up in his house by Bothwell's agency: the murderer carried off the Queen and married her. And now the patience of Scotland was at an end; Murray, the Queen's natural brother, defeated Bothwell, who fled to Norway; Mary was locked up in Lochleven Castle. Thence she escaped, and after a weak attempt to recover her throne, took refuge in England, where Queen Elizabeth, deeply embarrassed by the act, could do nothing but hold her a prisoner. Her son James was proclaimed King of Scotland, with Murray as his protector and defence. It was felt throughout Europe that this was a great blow to the high Papal cause: the Huguenots were greatly excited by it: their Scottish brethren in the faith had triumphed over a shifty and a crafty Queen; and why not also they?

Then came also tidings of great things in the Low Countries. The long-suffering patience of the Protestants in the provinces, they being also Calvinists, had at last begun to give way; the 'land beggars' had revolted here and there, but had been put down, and the noble-insurrection dispersed: in reply to the remonstrances of the chief nobles, Egmont, Horn, and William of Orange, who petitioned, protesting their loyalty, that the Inquisition might be abolished, Philip ordered the Duke of Alva to march with fourteen thousand Spanish veterans into the doomed country. The more prudent Flemish nobles escaped to Germany and elsewhere. The Huguenot leaders, who had already moved Orange and his friends to take up arms, now tried to persuade Charles IX that this was the moment for him to interfere; they told him that by a bold foreign policy he might win the southern provinces of the Low Countries for the crown of France.

On the other hand, the Cardinal of Lorraine was equally busy; he suggested that some strong places should be entrusted to the Duke of Alva; Alva too had a scheme which he imparted to Philip of Spain:—he offered to help Charles IX to crush the Huguenots with five thousand horse and fifteen thousand

foot[1]; were Charles IX to die—and what more likely?—'the possession of the strong places would enable Philip to assert his own claim to the crown of France, by right of Elizabeth his Queen; the Salic Law,' he adds, 'being a mere pleasantry[2].' Thus the struggle round the middle party at Court developed itself: the Huguenot and noble party desired the King to shake off all connexion with Spain, to stand forward as protector of the national and Calvinistic revolt of the provinces against the Catholic repression and foreign domination of Philip, while, on the other side, the high Catholic party urged him to unite himself still more closely with Spain, to give play to his own religious sympathies, to take Spanish help and crush the Huguenots for ever: the revolt of the Netherlands and resistance of the Calvinistic south of France should be put down together. On the one side were national advantages, and the true foreign policy of France, which fostered on all sides the resistance against the power of Spain, her mighty rival, a policy which ruled French statesmanship throughout the next century; on the other side, were the Catholic likings of the Court, and its dread of that aristocratic independence and those civic-republican ideas, which lay behind the stubborn and pugnacious self-assertion of the Huguenot opinions.

The struggle continues throughout the reign of Charles IX: it comes to a dramatic height when the massacre of S. Bartholomew's Day gives the reply to the tempting and almost accepted proposals of Admiral Coligny.

Catherine was true to her middle position; refused to interfere on either side; would neither allow the Duke of Alva to pass through French territory, nor give the Netherlanders help. Troops were sent to watch the Spaniards as they skirted the frontiers of France, and to hinder their entrance into the kingdom; when, after Alva was gone, the Queen still retained these soldiers in her pay, the suspicious Huguenots asked that

[1] See Alva's letter in Gachard, Correspondance de Philippe II. i. p. 608 (quoted in von Ranke, Französische Geschichte, i. 199).

[2] For this great intrigue see Anquetil's Esprit de la Ligue, i. 243.

they should be disbanded; Catherine however refused to do as they wished. It was rumoured, on the contrary, that she proposed to seize Condé and Coligny, to garrison the chief cities, and crush the Huguenots. They decided at once on open war, rather than endure such perilous and intolerable suspense. The seizure of the King and the Queen Mother was once more planned.

The outbreak took place in September, 1567: 'it was the reply of the Protestant spirit in France to Alva's undertaking in the Low Countries[1]': it was one element in that new and general resistance against the Catholic power which marks the later years of this century. At the first news of the outbreak the Court, which was at Monceaux in Brie, hastened up to Meaux, and sent on to Paris for escort: Swiss mercenaries and Parisian volunteers marched promptly forth, and brought the King and Queen Mother safely into the capital. Condé tried to bar their way, but he was not strong enough to do more than annoy the solid ranks of the Swiss, and irritate still farther the hostile temper of the King.

Condé and the Châtillons followed on the heels of the royal march, and sat down before Paris. Their force was small, some four thousand, with whom Condé tried by unwearied activity to starve the town, beleaguering it on the north side from river to river, just as Charles of Charolais had done in 1465; his head-quarters were at S. Denis[2]. Here he awaited the promised help from Germany and from the south of France, now in full revolt. But before any came, the Constable Montmorency marched out of Paris with a strong force to dislodge him. The old man was unskilful and unfortunate as ever on the battle-field: his artillery was useless, his infantry thrown into disorder, and he himself, as he led his cavalry to the charge, was struck down and killed. The Marshal Montmorency, his eldest son, took the command, and retrieved the fight: after a brief and obstinate contest the Protestants were forced to retire. Condé

[1] L. von Ranke, Französische Geschichte, i. p. 204.
[2] Cp. for this siege, De Thou, Hist. xlii. (tom. vi. pp. 565, 566).

fell back towards Lorraine, awaiting the coming up of John Casimir of the Palatinate with a strong force of Germans.

The Queen Mother, somewhat relieved by the death of the old Constable, determined that she would not again allow any subject to hold so important an office. Henry, Duke of Anjou, her third son, was named Lieutenant-General, with a kind of military council, which quarrelled as such councils do, and gave the Calvinists time to recover from the blow. Condé, now joined by the Germans, returned towards the heart of France: the Catholic and the Protestant armies were both in equal confusion and disorder. The Huguenots became dispirited; they felt that the Court and the people were both against them, and that their strength was not equal to the task they had set themselves. At last they accepted the very moderate terms offered them by Catherine, and the Peace of Lonjumeau[1] (23 March, 1568) ended the second war. As before, no one was satisfied; but no one had much heart for fighting, and all were glad of a respite. The peace did but reaffirm the Amboise Edict; the Huguenots promised to lay down arms, to give up such places as they had taken, and to dismiss their German friends.

The struggle seemed to be drawing to an end elsewhere: in Spain Don Carlos had just perished; because, it is said, after the manner of heirs apparent, he had dealt with his father's enemies, Elizabeth of England, and the Netherland nobles: the cruel war which destroyed the Spanish Moors was beginning; in the Netherlands Egmont and Horn were drawing nigh to the scaffold. Germany was quiet, in spite of the sympathies shown by the Rhine princes for the Huguenots; in a large part of the Empire the strict Catholics were steadily and rapidly recovering their ground. All things promised them victory in Europe: the reigning Pontiff, the terrible Michaele Ghislieri, had brought to the Papal throne the habits and temper of the

[1] This peace and that of 1570 were nicknamed 'la Paix boîteuse et malassise,' from their two royal plenipotentiaries, Biron (who was a lame man) and Malassise.

Inquisition, of which he had been the head: Philip II redoubled his efforts, under the influence of the fanatical old man, most grim of all S. Peter's successors. There was a momentary pause in the struggle; the Protestants felt that a great cloud overhung them; their future was dark in Germany, the Low Countries and France; only in England could they feel secure. The Prince of Nassau's attempt to support the Netherland insurgents was crushed at Dillenberg; the one brother was killed, the other, the famous William of Orange, compelled to take refuge with Condé. The resistance of the aristocratic temper in France and in the Netherlands had alike proved vain: the old feudal warfare, in the spirit of which they still fought, was powerless against the trained soldiery of the most warlike race in Europe, the Spaniards: and as yet the Reformation movement in the Low Countries had not aroused the fervour of the bulk of the people. When, as in Scotland, Geneva, Holland[1], the resistance ceases to be aristocratic and becomes popular, a new page of the world's history begins.

III. *Third War.* A.D. 1568–1570.

In France, however, this phase of the contest never came: she fought out the struggle in her own way, with far less of dramatic interest, and to a lame and incomplete conclusion. After the Peace of Longjumeau it seemed as if the Court had decided on ruining the Huguenots by all means, fair or foul. These heretic nobles, who were for tearing in pieces the religious and political unity of the realm, who muttered to themselves the old ominous phrases as to the 'Public Weal,' were regarded at Court as traitors: it was decided that they should be captured, and put away in detail. As preludes to the S. Bartholomew, all these attempts of the Queen Mother are instructive: they show that the ideas expressed in that great

[1] Holland and Zealand revolt in 1572: the effort of the 'water-beggars' follows that of the 'land-beggars'; the popular seafaring folk succeed where the landed nobles had failed.

crime were seething long before in the breasts of some at least of the perpetrators: during this time the quiet assassination of Calvinists all over the kingdom went steadily on: 'the dagger, the prison, and the slow execution of the secret cell, destroyed them[1]'. The air is full of murder all these years: neither moral reprobation nor judicial punishment intervenes to check it; and, worst of all, it is busily preached and practised by religion.

An attempt was made to seize Condé at his castle of Noyers in Burgundy, where Admiral Coligny was with him. Suddenly all the roads, bridges, fords, of the province were filled with soldiery, and Tavannes received orders to arrest him. But that shrewd politician, who had once before refused to make a treacherous attack on the German Reiters as they left France, now said 'the matter was too great to be entrusted to him': that 'he was not good at such surprises,' and he added, like an honest old soldier as he was, that 'if her Majesty would be pleased to declare open war, he would let her see how well he could obey.' Thus knowing that stricter orders would come, he managed to let some of his people fall into Condé's hands, and so to give him warning. The Prince, startled at the news, escaped at once; Tavannes' men offered no obstacle, and the 'enterprise ill-drawn by distaff and pen,' as Tavannes says, only succeeded in rousing once more the war-spirit of the Huguenots. Condé fled to La Rochelle, the royal officers doubtless conniving at his escape; for the gallant Prince was a favourite among them, and they had no heart for 'women's work' as they deemed it. Condé wrote to Vieilleville, who was in command in Poitou, that 'he had fled the best he could, and as long as land had served him: but being at La Rochelle, he found the sea; and not knowing how to swim, had been constrained to turn him round, and get back to land as best he could, and there to stand at bay against his foes'—alluding to the phrase with which Tavannes had warned him in Burgundy, 'the stag is in the toils, the chase is ready!'

[1] Anquetil, Esprit de la Ligue, i. p. 273.

Attempts were also made on other leaders: the Cardinal Châtillon, who was at Beauvais, escaped into Normandy, where he disguised himself in a sailor's dress, and boldly launched out in a little ship for England. Having safely crossed the stormy channel, he was very helpful to the Huguenots for the short remainder of his life, for Queen Elizabeth listened to him; De Thou speaks of his influence at Hampton Court[1]. The Queen of Navarre and her young son also took refuge at La Rochelle, which from this moment became the most important head-quarters of the Huguenots. Nothing, however, marked so clearly the revolution which had taken place at Court, as the dismissal of L'Hôpital, which occurred at this time. All moderation left the royal counsels: the King and Queen Mother seemed to throw themselves completely and finally into the hands of the Spanish-Catholic party; and yet it is interesting to see that, as though moderate ideas could not utterly perish in France, in these same days the middle-party, no longer favoured at Court, begins to take consistent form in the country: it is now that the strict Catholics affix to the moderates the opprobrious nickname of 'Politiques[2],' the men who preferred civil and temporal interests to their religious orthodoxy. They were Catholics, not Huguenots: but, strange as it seemed to both sides, they embraced the tolerant opinions of L'Hôpital, and succeeded to the middle-policy now abandoned by Catherine.

War broke out in 1568; alliance with the Netherland nobles was projected; Condé and Orange stand side by side. As von Ranke says[3], these great princes were not regarded as rebels either in England or in Germany: the aristocratic resistance to absolute monarchy, and to the hierarchic decrees of the Council of Trent, seemed to have its natural leaders in them.

[1] De Thou, Hist. xliv. (tom. vii. p. 175).

[2] Anquetil, Esprit de la Ligue, i. p. 274, where he remarks that the name was at first used in an odious sense, as of those who (according to the well-known formula, which expresses the temper of French politics at their best) 'preferred political interests before religious orthodoxy.'

[3] L. von Ranke, Französische Geschichte, i. p. 205.

It was fortunate for the constitutional life of England that her great Queen was driven to take the same side: Ghislieri's Bull of Excommunication was drawn up against her at this very moment, and she needed no farther proof that her interests and those of her country were one, and that they were closely wrapped up together in the great struggle which was now beginning.

Pius V sent troops across the Alps; Alva sent soldiers from the Netherlands, with the ominous instruction that they were to 'follow the example he had set them in the Low Countries.' The Huguenots showed unexpected strength in the outset; they mastered almost all the south and west, built a little fleet, and set on foot a considerable army. The whole of France was covered with partisan-troops, with the usual results: neither side spared the other: the war was more pitiless than ever throughout the late autumn and winter of 1568.

Condé had never been so strong: La Rochelle, a port well-known to the ships of England and the Netherlands, was his capital: it was a town of large municipal liberties, and of a stern republican spirit: there civic and seafaring independence were happily combined: Protestant views found there a natural home, and it became for nearly a hundred years the head-quarters of the Huguenots. It is said that at this moment Condé dreamed of Royal dignities; that he aimed at the overthrow of the feeble Valois, and establishment of a great Protestant kingdom in their stead[1].

Early in the spring the armies of Condé and the Duke of Anjou were face to face: Anjou, the stronger, eager to bring on a battle; Condé waiting for help from Quercy and from Germany, with which he expected to recover his superiority in strength. He first directed his course towards the south-west, to meet the force coming up from Quercy; but Anjou outmarched him, and barred his way at the river Charente: thereon he turned back, thinking that he could speedily reach the

[1] It is even said that he had money struck with the legend, 'Louis XIII, first Christian King of France.' See La Vallée, ii. p. 455.

Loire, and join John Casimir with his Germans. But Tavannes was swift and vigilant, and caught the Huguenot rearguard under Admiral Coligny not far from Jarnac on the Charente; Condé, after much vigorous fighting, charged with headlong bravery, and with a mere handful of men, into the heart of the enemy, and there surrounded met his death; the day was lost. The royal army gave no quarter to such officers as fell into their hands, with the exception of La Noue, who was with difficulty saved by an old comrade. Coligny with the main force fell back towards Saintes.

The news of Condé's death flew through France and made a deep impression: Charles IX heard of it at Metz, whither he had been taken to support the Duke of Aumâle in his endeavour to bar the way against the Germans: the joy of the King's party was extreme; it was as if a formidable rival for the throne had perished; it was believed that with his fall the Huguenot power would entirely disappear. On the contrary, it is doubtful whether Condé's death was not rather an advantage for the party. It cut them clear of all dubious and unpatriotic political aims, and made room for the wiser leading of Admiral Coligny: above all, it gave to the party its natural head, the head of the House of Bourbon, young Henry of Navarre.

The moment Jeanne D'Albret, Queen of Navarre, heard of the misfortune, instead of flying or of lingering irresolute where she was, she hastened to head-quarters, where she found Coligny, D'Andelot, and the main part of the beaten army. The 'Prince of Béarn' her son, was now fifteen years old; the young Prince of Condé, the eldest son of Louis, who had just fallen, some years younger. Holding these two boys one in each hand, she presented herself before the soldiers; with the heart and bearing of a heroine, and in a few inspiriting words, she called on them to accept the young Henry as their chief: he was received with loud enthusiasm; Coligny rejoiced to serve in his name, while he kept the real command; many noble partisans of the cause who had been too proud to take their orders from their equal the Constable,

eagerly obeyed the little Prince; discipline was restored, confidence returned; and the confederates took up a strong position at S. Jean d'Angeli under shelter of the Charente, behind Saintes. Here they awaited tidings of their friends, while the Duke of Anjou, who had shown plenty of courage at Jarnac, now displayed a want of confidence and energy which gave the Huguenots breathing-time; it was even suspected that he no longer cared to press them hard, now that the formidable rivalry of Condé was at an end. Expecting a strong force of Gascons under 'the Viscounts[1],' as well as Germans from the side of the three Bishoprics, Coligny presently moved out from behind the Charente. The Gascons came up by Auvergne, the Germans, brilliantly handled by the Duke of Zweibrücken, though he was wasted by fever, eluded or beat all opposition, and safely crossed the Loire at La Charité: just as the junction was about to be made, the Duke succumbed to disease, and died. He was a great loss to the Calvinists, although Count Mansfeld, the father of the hero of the earlier days of the Thirty Years' War, well filled his place: he easily completed the junction of the Germans with the Huguenots. Tavannes tells us that the failure of the French army to bar the way, arose not from its weakness,—for it was a far stronger force,—but from a Court intrigue. The Cardinal of Lorraine, now once more in the ascendent, sedulously poisoned the King's mind against the Duke of Anjou, while the Cardinal's kinsfolk in command, Nemours and Aumâle, were hindered by secret measures of the Queen, who now supported Anjou warmly, and dreaded any successes won by the Guises. The war was fatal to several chiefs of name. Of Calvinists, besides Condé and the Duke of Zweibrücken, D'Andelot, one of the noblest and most sincere of the Huguenot leaders, died of sickness[2]: while on the other side, on which good captains were scarce, Brissac perished, of all the fierce and brutal soldiery of the day one of

[1] For these seven Gascon Viscounts, see Tavannes, Collect. Univ. xxvii. p. 154, and xxv. p. 436.

[2] Of course it was alleged that both he and Zweibrücken were poisoned.

the most savage, and worthy to rank with D'Adrets as among the worst products of civil war. The Huguenots were now strong enough to take the field, and began to recover their confidence in skirmishes: they even won a battle at La Roche-Abeille, and treated the royal army ill, massacring their prisoners in cold blood. The Duke of Anjou found his forces melt away; the war became desultory and weak. On the other side the fruitless siege of Poitiers wasted the Huguenot strength, and Anjou with reinforcements compelled Coligny to fall back towards the south. After he had crossed the Dive at Moncontour, the royal army came on him: his men were in the utmost confusion, and fell an easy prey to Tavannes, one of the few real soldiers who remained in either camp. It was a mere carnage: the Huguenots lost everything, and hardly made a stand; Coligny, brave as a lion, but destitute of gifts of generalship, escaped with the remnant of his force to La Rochelle. It was thought that a fatal blow had been struck at the Huguenots. In this strait the Cardinal of Lorraine saved them; Charles IX, through the Cardinal's machinations, had now become intensely jealous of Anjou, the nominal commander at Moncontour: he himself took the command, and with the usual results: precious time was wasted on sieges of petty towns; S. Jean d'Angeli resisted for six weeks, and gave the Huguenots time to reorganise their forces. Coligny, always best in adversity, set forth on a half-marauding expedition through the south; defeated Montluc and reached Nimes with a growing army, eager for booty and adventures; he announced that he would march thence on Paris, and ransack and ravage France as he went. He passed up the Rhone and came as far as to Burgundy.

The Court was alarmed and wearied: after Moncontour the Papal and the Spanish troops had been recalled: Coligny in the East, La Noue in the South-West in Saintonge, seemed daily to grow more menacing. La Noue, the ablest of their captains, had organised a little fleet, which relieved La Rochelle from all fear of blockade from the sea: the Queen began to negociate. After a fierce battle at Arnay-le-Duc, in which

Coligny cut his way through the royal troops with much loss, he too became ready for peace.

The Peace of S. Germain (8 August, 1570), which conceded excellent terms to the Huguenots, though it may be doubted how far the Court was sincere, closed the third war, which had been terrible in its ravages and in the savage tempers it evoked. It was the best peace the Calvinists had made as yet: beside the old points of amnesty, and liberty of worship, restitution of confiscated goods, and right of holding offices under the State, they got a footing in the Parliaments (the first germs of the 'Chambres mi-parties,' or mixed tribunals), and also won the power of selecting four cities of refuge, four strong places in which they might put governors and garrisons of their own. They chose La Rochelle, and Cognac, Montauban in Languedoc, and La Charité on the Loire. The first and second were important for their hold on the south-western maritime Provinces: Montauban was their natural head-quarters in the south: La Charité gave their German friends a bridge by which to cross the Loire.

The Papal Court and Philip of Spain resisted and protested; for they thought the Huguenots might have been crushed: the Catholic party in France was greatly dissatisfied; the omens were not favourable for a settled peace.

CHAPTER IV.

The Epoch of the S. Bartholomew.

A.D. 1570–1573.

One of the open problems of history is this: was Catherine de' Medici sincere at this time? or were the favourable terms of this Peace of S. Germain granted only that they might lull the Huguenots into a false security? Was the Massacre already decided on? or did it spring up suddenly, an unpremeditated natural result of the general tendencies of the time? It is remarkable that almost every public act of this age in France can be interpreted either way; and probably in this case at least neither interpretation would be altogether wrong.

The point is not easy of solution: a glance at European affairs may help us.

The eager zeal of the high Catholic party had not flagged in these years. While Catherine grew more averse to the Huguenots, and more willing to be rid of them by any means, she also became more and more aware of the perils which threatened Europe from the other side. Philip of Spain had already shown that he was eager to interfere in French affairs; it seemed likely that when he had reduced the Netherlands, (and no one doubted his power to do that,) he would exercise overwhelming influence on the kingdom which lay between Spain and his late-revolted Provinces. His power seemed to increase year by year; he was known to cherish far-reaching schemes, of which the orbits centred round his own omnipotence as the one focus, and the restoration of Catholicism as the other. He would crush Queen Elizabeth, and the Protestants of England,

winning over to himself the English Catholic nobles; marry Mary of Scots to Don John of Austria, now in the highest bloom of reputation after Lepanto (Oct. 1571); Alva had been charged to connect himself secretly with the Duke of Norfolk[1], so as to secure the succession of the English Crown to Mary of Scots and her spouse: thus Scotland and England would be united together under his protection, and his supremacy in Europe would be safe. With these realms at his feet, the Netherlands appeased, and Italy submissive, France would be overshadowed and presently overpowered.

It is clear that these are not the schemes of a stiff 'pedant scribbling in his closet,' but the far-reaching plan of a tenacious if narrow statesman, whose religious ideal involved little morality and no pity, and whose political creed was completely subordinated to his theological predilections. It had a definite and distinct character, which rendered it very formidable: it admitted of no half-measures, no counterpoises; it kept no faith with the heretic, but also it let him know that he must expect none, nor look for mercy. Pius V, that Grand Inquisitor, and his great friend and shadow Carlo Borromeo, were in complete harmony with Philip: working together, they hoped to subdue all independent thought, and to lord it over Europe, body and soul.

These threatening prospects could not fail to influence France: her fanatic-party grew more restless, more exacting and vehement, while the Huguenots found that the great middle-party, the Politiques, made overtures to them, and that even the Court, opposed to them as it was, still for the moment at least found it desirable to hold out to them a friendly hand. And besides this, the Court itself was much split up; and the young King had begun to think himself old enough to have a policy of his own. Two things must be especially noted: first, that the tragedy of S. Bartholomew's Day was rendered possible, and took its darker tone, from the infirmity of the

[1] See De la Mothe Fénelon, quoted by von Ranke, Franz. Geschichte, i. p. 209, note 1.

King's character; and secondly, that it was an attack as much on the middle-party as on the Huguenots, though only a few of the victims of the massacre came from the ranks of the Politiques.

There were two lines that might be followed: either reconciliation with the Huguenot noblesse, and their employment in Flanders against Spain, or the destruction of their leaders and subjection of the rest by whatever means might be needful. It seems clear that Charles IX desired the former of these two courses, and Catherine the latter. The end arrived at in both cases was the same;—a united kingdom able to resist and thwart the great schemes of Philip;—the fear of that monarch is the true key to the whole affair. It must be added that at the outset neither Charles nor Catherine had the least wish to exterminate the whole Huguenot party, though there are distinct indications that the more vehement Catholics hoped for some such issue to the struggle. The chief political blunder lay in the ignorance shown by the Court as to the real strength of what we may call the Politique feeling in France, which as yet had not taken definite form: had the Court, which was without any strength of its own, allied itself with this middle-party, it might have roused in the nation a sense of its true interests, and rallied it round the throne; and so have made a united and constitutionally tolerant life possible for France.

The moment the Peace of S. Germain had been signed, the chief Huguenots, full of suspicions, and regarding its favourable concessions as a snare, withdrew sullenly to La Rochelle, where they grouped themselves round Jeanne of Albret and the young Henry of Navarre, vigilant, with their hands on the sword-hilt. To messages calling them to Court they replied that they could not come so long as their deadly enemies the Guises remained there: to the King's more urgent appeals and promises they at first made no friendly reply. Yet the more they held back, the more he appeared to desire them. His political position seemed to change: Catherine, the Queen Mother, fell into the back-ground; the

Guises lost favour: the party of Montmorency, which was connected with the Huguenots, became powerful[1]. Charles allied himself to the Imperial party in Germany, which was now antagonistic to the Spanish Court. He married, in 1570, Elizabeth of Austria, the daughter of Maximilian II[2], whose home-policy was marked by a distinct spirit of conciliation and moderation between the great religious parties.

To crown the whole, Charles now proposed an alliance which, in connexion with the other projected or accomplished marriages of the day[3], gave evidence of a complete change in the royal policy. This was the offer of the hand of Margaret of Valois, the King's sister, to Henry of Navarre, a proposal almost immediately followed by overtures for the marriage of the Duke of Anjou with Queen Elizabeth, a scheme which was also set on foot by Charles. The plan seems to have been this: The Duke of Anjou, whom Charles disliked,—for the Cardinal of Lorraine had poisoned his mind against him,—had hitherto been the prominent man on the royal side, and had won some repute in the late war; he was also his mother's favourite; he was now to be got rid of by this splendid alliance with the Queen of England. At the same time his marriage would secure a powerful friend on that side, and one who was thoroughly opposed to Spain and to the great schemes of Philip II. Next, it was thought that the wedding of Catholic with Protestant, of the Court with the Huguenots, in the marriage of Henry and Margaret, would secure the loyalty and put an end to the suspicions of the noblesse, while an interference, more or less marked and

[1] Tavannes, ch. xxiv (Collect. Univ. xxvii. p. 205).

[2] Tavannes, Memoirs (ibid. p. 197), gives a different colour to this alliance: 'Esperant (en vain) . . . . par ce mariage rompre les levées de Reistres si accoutumez à venir en France.' But Charles must have known how powerless the Emperor was on the Rhine. It is curious to notice that at this same moment Maximilian married another of his daughters, Anne, to Philip II; she was the fourth wife of that unpleasant husband.

[3] (1) Coligny now married the wealthy Savoyard widow Jacqueline of Monbel; and (2) gave his daughter to Teligny, the best negociator the Huguenots had. (3) Condé offered marriage to Mary of Cleves, a German Protestant alliance.

formal, in the Netherland troubles, would embarrass the Spaniards, would drain away the warlike Protestants, who would gladly flock to fight for their brethren against the Inquisition and the Spanish troops, and would win back to the French crown those frontier-towns which she had so often claimed, and sometimes for a while possessed. The Duke of Alençon, the King's youngest brother, was to command here; and at his service would be the high abilities of Admiral Coligny. There was a sketch also of farther operations on the Italian side; and it may be that Charles had dreams of glory there, by which, and by the exploits of Alençon, the reputation of his brother Anjou might be outshone. The Earl of Leicester came to Blois, where the Court lay, as ambassador from Queen Elizabeth; Louis of Nassau, and the great Prince of Orange himself[1], were in France, to concert measures respecting the war in the Low Countries. In spite of Bethune's[2] ominous prophecy—'at that marriage the liveries will be blood-red'—we must conclude that in the mind of Charles IX himself there was no connexion whatever between the 'noces vermeilles,' the 'crimson wedding,' and the massacre. It was proposed in perfect good faith. Margaret was averse to it, for she wished to marry the young Duke of Guise; and Charles forced the wedding on in a harsh and unnecessary way, if we choose to think he meant it only as a snare.

We must not forget that at this time a great and distinct divergence had taken place between the views of Catherine and those of her son. Charles IX was growing more jealous of Anjou, feeling that he was no longer a child or a puppet in his mother's hands, but a full-grown man[3], wishing to distinguish himself and play the man in war, and, with a

[1] So convinced was William of Orange that the King was in earnest, that he in consequence refused terms with Spain, which were offered him through the Emperor.

[2] He narrowly escaped in the S. Bartholomew, and was the father of the famous Duke of Sully.

[3] In 1570 Charles IX was 20 years of age.

view to this, more inclined to favour his nobles of the Calvinistic strain; above all, showing much of that petulance and intemperate eagerness which so greatly affected his action in the new direction. His mother was daily growing more convinced that the Huguenots must be rendered powerless, that she must side distinctly with the high Catholic party, and that Coligny was the one barrier to French unity in Church and State. She had no wish to see her favourite son, Anjou, banished to the honourable but perhaps painful dignities and duties of husband to Elizabeth of England. She despised the young King's character, and foresaw no trouble in reducing him again to order. She had determined that Coligny must be got rid of, and believed that the assassination of some half-dozen leaders of the Calvinists would effect her purpose. The Queen Mother's own confession that she had but six of the Huguenot deaths on her own conscience, and the well-known answer of Cardinal Guise to the messenger who brought him news of the Massacre (speeches which have been quoted as proofs that the S. Bartholomew had been planned long before its execution), may best be accounted for by the existence of a vague determination to be rid of the chiefs of the Huguenot party[1]. It is this alienation of the Queen Mother from her son which complicates the difficult questions as to the Massacre; at the same time, the divergence helps us to understand what the true facts were, and where the blame chiefly lies.

It was against the will of Catherine, then, that Charles made friendly overtures to the Huguenots; still more was she annoyed when she found how great an ascendency Admiral Coligny had won over him. The more sincere and enthusiastic the King became, the more anxious she grew, and the more inclined to violent measures.

In the end of 1571 Charles was at Blois, having gone thither to meet Jeanne of Albret, the Queen of Navarre, who, reluct-

[1] For a judicious account of the Queen Mother's hand-to-mouth policy, see Martin, Histoire de France, ix. pp. 271, 272, ed. 1857.

antly and anxiously, was obliged to enter into the negociation for her son's marriage with Margaret. She liked neither the bride nor the manners of the Court, in which, as she noticed, 'the honour of no man was safe.' Her objection was chiefly a moral one: she was shocked and disgusted at the dissoluteness of the courtiers, and at the coarse and abrupt manners of the King. With her came Coligny and young Henry of Navarre. The King welcomed them very warmly, and was fascinated by the high reputation, noble bearing, and far-reaching schemes and views of Coligny. He 'was certainly theirs,' says the eye-witness Tavannes, who, when the Guises left the Court in haughty displeasure, stayed behind to counteract the new combinations, and to dissuade the King from his changed career. 'Incessantly,' he adds, 'does the Admiral with great assurance visit the King[1].' The Papal Legate also remonstrated; but his words and threats were powerless. The Queen Mother looked on awhile, half-amused, thinking that at any moment she could recall her son. It was noticed that the Duke of Alençon was particularly cordial in dealing with the Admiral, whose plans depended much on him. Alençon was apparently quite sincere in the moderation he expressed, and in his alliance with the Huguenots; it was his natural policy, and he did not abandon it even after the great shock of S. Bartholomew's Day.

In these days nothing was talked of but the plans for a war in the Low Countries. The King took eager part in all discussions; papers were drawn up for and against: Tavannes has left a specimen of his dissuasive eloquence in his Memoirs[2]. Although the desires of Charles seem to have been completely with the Admiral, he still fluctuated and hesitated, afraid or unwilling to take the last step. Meanwhile La Noue raised troops in Normandy for Flanders, and the Admiral ordered a force of six thousand men to be embarked at Bordeaux for the same destination. The Hugue-

[1] Tavannes, ch. xxv (Collect. Univ. xxvii. p. 217).
[2] Tavannes, ch. xxvi (ibid. xxvii. pp. 229, sqq.).

nots, eager and presumptuous, were bent on forcing the King's hand. A treaty of alliance with England was drawn up and signed (22nd April, 1572); negociations went on with the Protestant Princes of Germany; the French court reverted to its traditional policy of friendship with the Turk, who was still staggering under the tremendous blow of the Battle of Lepanto; the sudden revolt of Holland and Zealand, and the early successes of the water-beggars, were already causing Alva no little uneasiness. A considerable body of men, chiefly Calvinists, under La Noue and Genlis, surprised Mons and Valenciennes; the Huguenots made every effort to persuade the King to recognise these volunteers by sending a force to their support.

The Court came up from Blois to Paris, the Huguenot nobles accompanying it, and making a great show. The death of the Queen of Navarre which now occurred was of evil omen for the Protestant party. There was the usual charge and suspicion of poison; in this wretched age it was only too probable. Her death however is quite sufficiently accounted for by natural causes: 'On the fourth of June she fell ill of fever, caused, they said, by the diseased state of her lungs, which were disturbed and irritated by the great heats, and by the unusual amount of work and anxiety which she had to bear[1].' D'Aubigné says of her that she 'had nothing of the woman in her except her sex; her whole soul was given up to manly things, her powerful mind occupied in large affairs, her heart invincible in great adversities.' She was the noblest woman of her time, a pillar of light shining in the gloom and corruption of her age.

Her death deferred for a short time the much-desired marriage of Henry, who now took his title of King of Navarre.

[1] Jean de Serres, Inventaire général de l'Histoire de France, Tom. V. p. 283 a. L'Estoile (ed. Michaud, II. i. p. 24) believes in the poison story. The Queen's body was opened, and the lung-disease plainly showed the cause of death. Palma Cayet gives details which amply account for her death by natural causes: there was a kind of inquest held on her. P. Cayet, Collect. Univ. lv. pp. 312, 313.

The Catholic party eagerly employed the interval. Paris was restless, and irritated at the sight of these half-foreign Calvinists, these gentlemen of the south of France, these austere Huguenots whom she hated. The clergy preached and printed inflammatory addresses; scuffles and struggles went on; the Queen Mother plunged deep into intrigues and plans to recover her influence, and to rid herself of these heretics, whether the King liked it or not. He meanwhile showed more and more favour to the Huguenot chiefs: one and another might be distrustful; but Coligny their leader, who was ever with Charles, and Teligny, their skilful negociator, were full of confidence, which unfortunately, however well founded it might have been at first, did not take into calculation the King's shifting and unstable nature.

They did not remember that all his training, all the influences round him, were bad; partly an Italian, a Medici, with divided Papal and Florentine sympathies, partly a Frenchman, he had the faults of all, redeemed perhaps by his less malignant disposition. A man of violent temper, a furious and profane swearer, immoral, false and unstable, Charles was but a poor creature in whom during these slippery days an unpopular party could put their trust. And yet Coligny had some good grounds for trusting. As he said, 'he would rather be dragged through the streets of Paris by a hook, than give up the chance of peace at home and war abroad.' He was convinced as to the King's sincerity; a man of boundless courage, he honestly preferred the risks of death to a renewal of the miseries of civil war. He redoubled his attention, his arguments, in favour of the Flanders scheme; he regarded it as the salvation of his country. 'Such was the temper of the French,' says De Thou, 'that unless they have a foe abroad, they find out one at home[1].' The King, too, 'was sick of the ennui of long ease.' Coligny told him that the time was most opportune; the Flemish cities ready to revolt against Alva; England prepared to help; Germany very friendly, and quite

[1] De Thou, Hist. lib. li. tom. viii. p. 79.

inclined to send her Reiters into the Low Countries instead of into France; the forces at the disposal of the Prince of Orange almost, taken alone, a match for those of Alva; the revolt already begun at the Rhine-mouths; the troops of La Noue and Genlis successful at Mons. Yet the King hesitated and doubted. Eager as he was for the Flemish enterprise, and easy as it seemed, it was hard for him to break away; he was a prey to many suspicions, jealousies, and doubts; he distrusted both sides. There exists a record of a talk he had with Teligny as to his chief advisers at this time: Tavannes, he said, 'is a man of good counsel, but conceited and jealous lest new enterprises undertaken by others should rob him of his laurels.' As to Vieilleville, 'one cannot talk to him of anything but good wine.' The Marshal Cossé was avaricious and selfish; 'he would sell us all for ten crowns.' Montmorency 'is a good fellow, and I could trust myself to him,' 'but he is too fond of sport and amusements, and is never there when he is wanted.' Retz[1] is a mere Spaniard; as to the others they are all 'beasts' and useless[2]. Of Anjou the King was jealous; his mother he could not trust for an instant; it was said, and probably with truth, that she kept Alva informed of everything that occurred or impended in France[3]. So, though the King allowed Louis of Nassau to go forward with the Calvinists, and even to help himself to powder from the arsenal at Paris, he hesitated and lingered on the threshhold; nor could Coligny persuade him to move: he seemed paralysed, when he ought to be in action; he was not sorry when news came that Alva had caught Genlis, had defeated him, and had butchered the prisoners he had taken. The tidings of this mishap form the turning-point[4] in the history of the Massacre: 'The Queen Mother,' says Tavannes, 'was

[1] This was Albert of Gondi, the great-uncle of the more famous Cardinal.
[2] Mémoires de Pierre L'Estoile (Michaud, II. i. p. 25).
[3] So stated in the 'Tocsain contre les Massacreurs'; Cimber et Danjou, I. vii. p. 22.
[4] Tavannes, ch. xxvii (Collect. Univ. xxvii. pp. 247, 248): 'Ceste route jointe aux menaces et imprudence des Huguenots sont autheurs de leur massacre.'

thoroughly frightened; the Admiral was vexed and provoked, and warned the King that he must choose between a foreign and a civil war.' And now the Queen Mother, feeling that her time was come, began to move; her idea was not to use the King 'till they might have need of some furious personage.' She was also seriously alarmed. The English alliance having failed, a new opening had been found for the Duke of Anjou; the throne of Poland was vacant. The Polish nobles would not choose one of themselves; they were determined not to have a German; they were attracted by Anjou's brilliant reputation; the able negociation and management of Montluc, Bishop of Valence, the King's envoy, influenced them greatly; the matter was much discussed at the French court. Coligny set himself strongly against this new direction of affairs; he said that as Anjou had refused the English match and crown therewith, he was bound in honour, if elected, also to refuse the Polish crown. The Queen Mother, on the contrary, was eager to advance her favourite son; and finding Coligny more and more in her way, finally determined to recover her influence with the King and to rid herself of the Admiral, and of his power over the royal mind. Charles had gone to Montpipeau to hunt; the Queen Mother followed him thither with such hot haste that 'some of her carriage-horses fell dead in the Martroy square at Orleans.' She then had a very stormy interview with her son, in which she was not sparing of tears and threats and prayers to be sent back to Italy, and showed him that she knew all his plans; she soon brought the poor unstable monarch back submissively to her feet. She and her counsellors feeling the King insecure, unless Coligny's influence was removed, at once laid their plot for the Admiral's assassination. The Guises, who still charged him with complicity in the murder of Duke Francis in 1563, were to bear the blame of his death, if the King inquired into it; but the true murderers were to be Anjou and the Queen Mother. The bravo Maurevel, who had already shown skill in assassination, was engaged by the Duke of

Aumâle to do the deed. While all this was being stealthily prepared, the marriage of Henry, King of Navarre, with Margaret took place, and the Court, with all Paris, gave itself up to spectacles and fêtes. All this, while the precious time was slipping away in the Low Countries, annoyed and vexed the Admiral, who 'continued his boldness and importunities'; he became aware that some secret 'remora' delayed the movements of the King. Things now came to a crisis. As he returned from the Council (21st August, 1572) he was shot at from a window and wounded, the assassin escaping 'on a swift Spanish horse.' The wounds proved but slight. When the King was told of it, he was playing at ball; he threw his racket down, with an angry expression, 'Will they never leave me alone!' and gave up his game. We may fairly believe that he was quite sincere in his anger; he swore he would bring the assassin and his backers to justice; he threatened the Guises, whom he suspected, visited the Admiral in bed, and held kindly talk with him, to the great annoyance of Catherine, who was present,—for she did not dare to lose Charles from her sight for a moment,—and stood there watching like a cat her foolish son and her prostrate victim. The Huguenots complicated matters by their menaces and armed remonstrances; for they frightened the poor King, who now fell completely into his mother's hands. The failure to murder the Admiral became the real immediate cause of the massacre of S. Bartholomew's day; for Catherine, in utmost alarm, real or simulated, confessed to Charles that she and Anjou were the authors of the attempt; and worked on his fears, by persuading him that the Huguenots were already in arms to avenge him, and that they had sent into Germany for help, while the Catholics, worn out by the King's marked preference for the Protestant party, had determined to elect the Duke of Guise as their chief, and to bring the matter to a speedy decision. She then pointed out to him the risk he ran between the two parties, and conjured him to throw in his lot with the Catholics, and to let them

crush their enemies by a sudden blow; if not, the Admiral's recovery would be the signal for a fourth Civil War. At first the King tried to escape from the toils; he refused to allow them to touch the Admiral, and cast about for other means by which to remedy the evils of the time. But they plied him hard; and the Duke of Anjou, whose account of the whole affair[1] still exists, tells us that 'at last we carried our point, and were aware instantly of a sudden change and strange metamorphosis in the King, who came over to our side. If he was before hard to convince, now he was hard to restrain. He rose, bade us be silent, and with a face of fury, with great oaths (after his sort) said that as we found it good to kill the Admiral, he wished it too; but that with him we must massacre all the Huguenots in France, lest one should be left to reproach him afterwards.' And Tavannes adds[2], 'from this present peril sprang the necessity, such as it was, of killing the Admiral, and all the party chiefs, a plan born of the moment, through the fault and imprudence of the Huguenots.' It was a terrible, almost momentary, impulse of the King's. On his part there was no premeditated guile; he was incapable of hiding his feelings; his coarse, rough nature blurted out just what he thought. His complicity in the great crime begins after the attempt on the Admiral. He was the last to consent, the first to repent.

The very next day, Sunday, the 24th of August, S. Bartholomew's day, was fixed on; for the Guises wished to make short work of it. They even proposed to kill the Bourbons and Montmorencys; but the Queen Mother would not hear of that. The King, to forget himself, went and worked at a forge which he had put up in the Louvre, thus seeking to exhaust his nervous energy and his anger: the Guises meanwhile laid their plans: they were helped by the blind confidence of Coligny and his son-in-law Teligny, who, utterly unconscious

[1] In the Memoirs of Villeroy, Discours de Henry III à son médecin Miron sur les causes de la S. Barthélemy (Petitot, I. xliv. p. 508).

[2] Tavannes ch. xxvii (Collect. Univ. xxvii. p. 265).

of the King's change of temper, and unable to get access to him, trusted implicitly to a goodwill which had been suddenly dissipated without their knowledge. The other Huguenots were disquieted: they appeared in arms, defiant and restless, half-conscious of some great and imminent peril.

Between one and two o'clock on the Sunday morning a bell began to ring through the stillness of the night from the steeple of S. Germain-l'Auxerrois: it was the signal that the hour was come. Immediately the bells of a hundred churches made reply with their sacred sound: the massacre began; the streets were suddenly filled with soldiers and citizens, all wearing a white cross. The Duke of Guise at once made sure of the Admiral, who met his death with a dignity worthy of his life and faith; there fell the noblest spirit in France. Then the whole passion of the Parisian mob broke loose. The leaders had wished to murder only a few chiefs: but Paris would not be held, and having tasted blood, her tiger-nature was up: she rushed with dripping dagger on defenceless victims, surprised in their beds. All who were on the north side of the Seine perished: those who were lodged on the other side were alarmed in time, escaped before the destroyer was on them, and galloping southwards, half-dressed, as they had leapt from sleep, outstripped their pursuers.

The daybreak saw the work almost done: in the houses, in the streets, lay the helpless dead: Paris was like a conquered city; corpses were flung out of window, dragged through the town, cast into the Seine. The Admiral, Teligny his son-in-law, La Rochefoucauld, whom the King had tried to save, all the Huguenot chieftains, perished: the renowned Ramus was murdered by his pupils, Goujon was said to have been killed chisel in hand as he was working at the sculptures on the Louvre[1]. It is said by Brantôme that Charles, carried away by the excitement of the scene, took a gun, and fired at those who fled, screaming 'Kill, kill!' at the top of his voice. As the

[1] Most improbably; the massacre beginning in the night.

day wore on, he traversed the streets with a brilliant retinue, to show his approval of the ghastly deed. That night it seemed likely that the town would be sacked and plundered: many who were not Huguenots had perished; every debtor sought out his creditor, old grudges were paid off, old enmities found means to express themselves in murder: all law and order were at an end. So weak was the central authority, that the massacre went on for several days, dying out reluctantly, as a great fire sinks slowly down into thick smoke and ashes, after it has consumed some stately building, and brought it to the ground.

The King, in accordance with his sensitive, changeable nature, soon wearied of the disgusting scenes,—his remorse began even before the crime was half-committed. As he passed with his train through the streets, two days after the massacre began, a gentleman in his suite was recognised as a Huguenot: the mob at once fell on him, and killed him hard by the King's person: he heard the noise, turned round, and, on seeing what it was, said hastily, 'Pass on, would to God it were the last[1]!'

Here and there an act of generosity gleams for an instant over the dark scene: the nobles of the moderate party saved all they could; the young Duke of Alençon was at no pains to hide his dislike and distress: 'it is said that he was so much vexed by such cruelties, that he even wept; whereat they scolded him well[2].' A Querci gentleman named Vezins, meeting his private enemy, a Huguenot, set him on a horse, and bade him escape for his life. Here and there in the provinces a commandant refused to sanction disorder and murder. In Provence, Dauphiny, Burgundy, Auvergne, at Mâcon and Bayonne, the Huguenots were saved from the violence of their eager enemies. Such instances of humanity, however, were rare; the massacre was a theatre for but little magnanimity; the Church vied with the civil power in crushing those who had so long

[1] 'Le réveille-matin des François' in Cimber et Danjou, I. vii. p. 194.
[2] Cimber et Danjou, ibid. p. 132.

been an eyesore to both. Henry, Duke of Bouillon, tells us in his Memoirs that 'this inhuman act, which was followed in all the towns of the kingdom, well-nigh broke my heart; it made me love both the persons and the cause of those of the Religion, even though I then had no acquaintance with their creed[1].'

The two Bourbon Princes were offered life and freedom if they would hear the Mass. Under compulsion, Henry of Navarre, whose religious impressions were not of martyr-stuff, yielded at once; the young Prince of Condé showed more firmness, but gave way at last: the Cardinal Bourbon, their uncle, made matters smooth for them at Rome. Most of these sudden conversions lasted just as long as the peril lasted, and no longer. The 'changed shield' of Burbo, which Spenser makes Queen Elizabeth regret so much at a later time, had once before passed from white to red, and from red to white again.

It is not easy to gather what the bloodshed amounted to. Davila puts it at ten thousand in Paris, of whom over five hundred were noble and gentle; he says that altogether, in Paris and the provinces, over forty thousand perished: Sully goes farther, and puts it at seventy thousand; Péréfixe, who exaggerates, says a hundred thousand: at the lowest computation two thousand fell in Paris, and about twenty thousand in the provinces. The numbers are unimportant: the guilt of this great crime does not depend on the figures.

At first poor Charles thought to shift the burden from himself to the Guises and the populace: but after a while Catherine persuaded him into believing that he must assume the responsibility himself; he therefore declared in a solemn 'lit de justice,' that the massacre was done at his command, and, amidst the plaudits of a delighted people, went to view the bodies of the victims displayed on the scaffold of Montfaucon. He declared that Coligny had made a slave of him: he even hinted that

[1] Mémoires du D. de Bouillon (Michaud, I. xi. p. 9). He was the father of the famous Marshal Turenne, who was brought up a Protestant.

there was a great Huguenot conspiracy to assassinate him and all the royal family, a charge made on the general principle that 'you may always safely abuse the absent'; for the men were dead, and there was no shadow of foundation for the charge. In taking it on himself the King at once received the honour due to him: not only did his popularity return, but pamphlets of apology, even of triumph, poured forth from the press; the Papal Court broke out into high rejoicings, Capi Lupi and Davila wrote eulogies on these grand acts which had abolished the Huguenots: the Papacy had a medal struck[1], a picture painted, high service[2] performed in honour of it. Philip II felt that he breathed again: the whole combination against him was broken up; he saw his deadly enemies destroyed, and believed that in the Netherlands he could now speedily crush their brethren; he wrote with warm and almost envious congratulations to his brother-monarch: a medal with the legend 'Charles IX dompteur des rebelles, 24 Aoust, 1572,' was struck at Paris. The high Catholic party in its triumph sought to prove that the massacre had been planned for eight years, and that Charles had shown the most profound wisdom throughout the period. It was not long before the King wearied of these sanguinary glories, these bandit-praises of Pope and Catholic King: remorse settled down, like a harpy on the defiled banquet, on his disgusted spirit; he was thenceforth broken in body and mind. Some eight days after the massacre, deep in the night, he called for his brother-in-law, the King of Navarre. When Henry came into his chamber, he found Charles standing on the floor, excited and feverish, declaring that cries and screams had wakened him from sleep. Henry listened, and to him also, in the dead silence of the slumbering city, there seemed to come

[1] Anquetil, Esprit de la Ligue, ii. p. 66. On the obverse, the head of Gregory XIII; on the reverse, the destroying angel making short work of his victims: the legend, VGONOTTORVM·STRAGES·1572. This medal exists in three different forms, an example of each of which is in the British Museum. The genuineness of it has been challenged by apologists; Bonanni, a Jesuit, in his Numismata Pontiff. Romanorum, 1699, has no doubts.

[2] A copy of the Office compiled for the occasion is in the Bodleian Library; as copies were sedulously destroyed, it is very rare.

up a confused clamour of shrieking and sighing. They sent men out into the town to inquire if all was still: these came back saying that the streets were quiet, but that there were strange noises in the air. The King of Navarre was so much affected that he declared that whenever the memory of this scene came back to his mind, his hair stood on end with fear[1].

The guilt of this terrible event must be spread over a broad surface: none of the actors are altogether blameless.

The party of the Guises, the instruments of bloodshed, must come first: they not only planned and approved of the massacre, but actually executed it: they stand out as the representatives of that fierce spirit, which (though far from being confined to them) characterises the temper of those who fought on behalf of the Catholic reaction. Their stem-principle was coercion; the Inquisition, or the assassin's knife, or any form of terrorism, seemed to them not only allowable but natural. They dabbled in murders; the chronicle of the years before the S. Bartholomew massacre is filled with acts of violence done by their agency: the massacre itself was but a larger and shining illustration of their principles. To their habits of violence, joined with the temper of the Parisian mob, we owe the spread of the bloodshed far beyond the limits which the Court wished to impose on it: the general massacre is to be laid to their charge. With them we must group the city of Paris, their ready accomplice through this period. In how many causes has she passed from a generous sympathy to ghastly bloodshed and excess!

But the most guilty of all was the Queen Mother. Her hand-to-mouth policy may be pleaded as a partial excuse for her; we may think that she drifted into this crime, almost unconsciously. But, without affirming that she had long cherished a plan to assassinate those well-known six whom she

[1] Ranke, Französische Geschichte, i. p. 238. The authorities for the Massacre are exceedingly numerous and weighty. In the Cimber and Danjou collection a whole volume is given to contemporary records; Tavannes was an actor in it; De Thou got his details from eye-witnesses; Anjou left behind him his own narrative (in Villeroy's Memoirs); the Prince de la Tour d'Auvergne, Brantôme, D'Aubigné, all contribute something.

had on her conscience, there can be no doubt that hers was the evil spirit which prompted the whole thing: she had no moral sense; the usual laws of a wholesome and pure life were unknown to her; Italian intrigue in love or war, consummate falseness, absolute indifference as to the moral qualities of the means she used to compass her ends, these were the characteristics which we note throughout her career, and by these she was led into the very pit of moral shame, dragging down with her the Court, the Church, the French nation itself. To this at last came those Italian influences of this age of which she was the representative and chief exponent.

The blame due to Charles IX is of a totally different kind, and is bound up with the inherent faults of his character. His self-indulgence, his coarse and brutal manners, the violence of his impulses, checked by no power of ruling reason, made him a prey to the bad influences round him. We can see from the glimpse we have of his dealings with Coligny, that the poor youth had in him capacity for good; that his great faults might have been lessened, if not corrected, by the help of some stronger and purer nature. But this was not to be his fate. Diseased in mind and body, surrounded by every form of corruption, played on by cunning and unscrupulous partisans, with such a mother at his right hand, the wretched King had no chance of better things. We must not forget that throughout the whole affair he was pushed on against his will and judgment, passionately and feebly resisting, trying to hide the gross evil from his own consciousness, repenting at the very moment of execution[1], and when the paroxysm of fear and violence was over, at once giving way to bitter remorse.

The Pope and the Spanish King we may group together as accomplices throughout in spirit, who took on themselves a share of the blame in cold blood, by approving the massacre when it was done. They showed themselves consistent and worthy heads in Church and State of the party of repression,

[1] The Court sent out orders to stay the execution after the fatal bell had rung. But no one cared to obey; the massacre had already begun.

now in full swing of the tide of that reaction which marks so distinctly the latter half of the century.

And lastly, we cannot acquit the sufferers themselves of all blame. Though we may set aside the scandalous abuse heaped on the memory of Coligny by his enemies, and the groundless tale as to a plot to assassinate the Court, we still cannot shut our eyes to the arrogance of the Huguenots, their armed threats and violent language, their declarations that the King must choose between war at home and war abroad, their contemptuous treatment of the Paris mob and its prejudices, things which helped to lash their antagonists into frenzy. Intolerance, political or religious, is the fatal characteristic, throughout its history, of French party-life: and the Huguenots again and again rendered concession and compromise impossible: though they wanted only what was just, they demanded it in such a way as to arouse most vehement opposition. A cause which is constantly exciting resistance, instead of smoothing away obstacles from the path, naturally ends in some terrible overthrow; and so the ill-treated Huguenots, depositories of almost all the virtue and thrift in the land, were not content to ask for a fair toleration, but mixed themselves up with the political projects of discontented nobles, and alienated from themselves any good-will the Court might have been inclined to show them; at the same time, by their narrow and unpatriotic spirit they made it clear that, were they ever to come into possession of power, their antagonists the Catholics would have no chance of living peaceably side by side with them. The history of the great massacre exposes plainly the weak side and inherent faults of French political life.

The effects of the massacre in France were not so great as was expected. For the principles of the Huguenots remained, though their leaders were stricken down: and as soon as the first stupor passed away, they became as troublesome as ever to the Court, though as a religious party they were sensibly weakened. The reaction caused by violence brought the party of the 'Politiques,' the moderates, to the front: henceforward

they lead, and the Huguenots are but a wing in their army. Parties thus are simplified into two; that is, the Moderates with the Protestants, and the League; in spite of Catherine's wish to continue her balancing policy, the Court is sucked into the strife and itself becomes a partisan, joining now one side and now the other; it is dragged at the heels of this or that leader, without dignity or independence, and pays a terrible penalty for complicity in the great crime. The result abroad is much more marked: for it was the entire overthrow of the policy of the party: for the moment Spain was the great gainer. In the Netherlands the revolt seemed to be coming to an end; Mons was retaken; the Prince of Orange, who was lying in the Southern provinces, hoping for the Huguenot help half-promised him by Charles IX, was obliged to retreat into Holland, and Alva punished the Walloon provinces with revolting cruelty: the Calvinist resistance seemed everywhere weakened. In England and in Germany alike there was a strong sense of the atrocity of the act: Maximilian II is said to have wept when he heard the news; Queen Elizabeth and her Court put on mourning, and received the French ambassador with cold severity: a new enthusiasm was aroused in England, of which Spenser became the eloquent spokesman: the Queen thought her life no longer safe; her people rallied round her, and resolutely determined to resist the Spanish power wherever an opening might be found[1].

IV. *Fourth War.* A.D. 1572–1573.

The South of France broke into open revolt: La Rochelle, Montauban, Sancerre, Nimes, took up arms, and closed their gates against the royal troops. The Court at first tried to avoid war; for war was a confession that their great crime had been committed in vain: and moreover moderate counsels were once more dominant in the breast of the Queen Mother. La Noue,

[1] Hume, History of England, iii. p. 539 (ed. 1848).

the 'Bayard of the Huguenots,' had been taken prisoner in Mons by the Duke of Alva, who sent him to Charles IX. He expected nothing but death: to his amazement he found himself caressed and flattered: the duty of appeasing the revolt of La Rochelle was forced on him. After some reluctance he accepted the task; and the world saw the strange sight, so soon after the massacre, of the most noted Huguenot leader employed by the Court to reduce the resistance of the most important Huguenot stronghold. Stranger still, the Rochellois, instead of yielding to him, offered him the command of their forces; and La Noue filled at the same time the two incompatible positions of King's officer and of general commanding the troops of the insurgent city. Both parties trusted him: the King believed that he would appease the troubles; the Huguenots were sure that he would not betray them to the King: the most amazing of all results was that he justified their confidence, without forfeiting the royal favour.

The Huguenot movement began to take a more distinctly republican tone: a scheme of organisation was drawn up: there was talk of a 'Roman dictator,' of a great Council in each town, of a federation of independent cities, based partly on the liberties of the Protestant towns, partly taken from the example of Switzerland[1]. It was felt that La Rochelle, the 'white city' as the English called it, was the true centre of resistance. La Noue, while he steadily exhorted the people to submit to the King, as steadily busied himself strengthening the fortifications, and making every preparation for resistance: he withdrew from the town after a while, at the King's command.

In the spring of 1573 the royal army was reluctantly set in motion: it was commanded by Anjou, who had with him the Duke of Alençon, the Bourbon Princes, and twenty thousand men loosely gathered together, and but poorly furnished. La Rochelle on her side resisted heroically: assault after assault was repulsed: the nobles in the royal army kept the Huguenots informed of everything: a fleet of little ships, commanded by

[1] Martin, Histoire de France, ix. p. 353 (ed. 1857).

Montgomery, supplied the place with food. Elsewhere the same tenacious resistance went on: Sancerre underwent a long and terrible siege. The King had no heart for the struggle; everything fell into confusion: it was said that this war had exhausted the realm more than any that had gone before. The 'Third Party,' the Moderates, headed by the four Montmorencys, who had protected the Huguenots in the massacre, drew towards the Duke of Alençon, whose tendencies were also friendly to the Huguenots, and who already with the Queen Mother's approval had begun to scheme for the hand of Queen Elizabeth, and a Protectorate of the Netherlands. It became clear that the war could not go on; that the Huguenots were not crushed; that peace must come.

The Queen Mother seemed determined to follow her old lines of policy: the Edict of Boulogne (6 July, 1573) gave the Huguenots even more than they had got from the Peace of S. Germain: amnesty, restoration of property and honours, liberty of conscience, freedom of worship in La Rochelle, Montauban and other cities; all feudal possessors of the higher justice were allowed to have Huguenot service in their homes. The Huguenots seemed indestructible: their new allies the Politiques gave them renewed and redoubled strength.

CHAPTER V.

The Wars of the League. A.D. 1574–1584.

Just as the embers of the Fourth Civil War were dying down, Paris was astonished by the entry of a train of foreigners, whose strange looks and fantastic dresses were unlike anything known in the western world. These were the envoys from Poland, who had come to lay their crown at the feet of Henry of Anjou, whose prudent ambassador Montluc, Bishop of Valence, had at last triumphed over all opposition, though not without conditions which must have sounded like a sarcasm after the events of late years. Montluc promised, on the Duke's behalf, that not only should the rights of Poland be duly cherished, but that the French Huguenots should be fairly and clemently treated: the conditions of the Peace of La Rochelle were partly at least due to this Polish transaction.

Henry and the Queen Mother, after they had gained their wish, as is so often the wont of mean and ambitious natures, regretted what they had won: the Duke left France with many a sigh for a speedy return. His journey through Germany was not a happy one: at the Court of John Casimir he found himself unpleasantly surrounded by the dark faces of Huguenot refugees; the Elector himself did not disguise his abhorrence, and cut Anjou very short, when he began with the established excuses as to the treason of Coligny and the like: 'We know all that history,' was the German's scornful reply.

No sooner was Henry gone to Poland than fresh troubles began in France. His youngest brother, the Duke of Alençon, now left without a rival—for the King had withdrawn from public life—chafed under the neglect and dislike of his mother. He declared openly that he feared her: he expected to be assassinated by her; he connected himself with the King of

Navarre and the Montmorencys. The Huguenots, restless and determined, thought little of the late Treaty of Peace, and clamoured for better terms. All things pointed to fresh outbreaks; and the Court, utterly without resources, with the King slowly but certainly dying, was in the greatest perplexity and distress.

It is not clear what the plans of the disaffected nobles were: some said there was a plot to snatch power from Catherine's hands and to dismiss her to Italy: or a plot to destroy the King; or a plot to secure the throne for Alençon to the prejudice of the new King of Poland and the Queen Mother: others have conjectured that there was no plot at all, but a scheme of Catherine, to enable her to lay hands on the leaders of the opposition, under cover of a trumped-up conspiracy, a subtlety in government which seems to belong more to imperial than to monarchical days. The air was full of these ominous conjectures: men's minds had lost their balance, so deeply had the horror of the times affected them. Rumours of melting waxen figures[1], of influences occult and baneful, of sorcery and magic, were whispered from ear to ear: the wretched King strove to hide his coming fate and his remorse from himself, now by debauches deep and scandalous, now by headlong hunting-parties, now by working with fierce and feverish energy at his forge; till at last his strength utterly gave way, and the dark shadows he had striven to keep at bay crowded around his death-bed. The press teemed with pamphlets against the Court: the Politiques called loudly for the convocation of the States-General, and for a reform of the realm: the great work of Hotmann, the Franco-Gallia, appeared; it contained a new theory of civil life, and was a reaction against the theory, based on the Roman Law, and dominant in France, of an absolutist monarchy; it advocated a return to the old Frankish system of elective royalty, in the hands of the nobility: its germ clearly lay in the late election to the Polish throne: and its aim, as clearly, was to strengthen the resistance to Catherine and Henry of Poland.

It was in these days that Catherine either concocted or

[1] De Thou, Hist. lib. lvii. tom. viii. p. 592.

detected the so-called plot: and gave herself a new lease of power. She seized the Duke of Alençon and the King of Navarre, and shut them up at Vincennes; Montmorency she also got into her power, with some of the lesser leaders: she carried the dying King from S. Germain to Vincennes. He for his part would gladly have favoured Alençon—he hated his brother Henry, loathed and tried to assassinate the Duke of Guise, chafed under his mother's management. His rage, and efforts, and remorse, were all in vain: all he could do was to die (May 1574). He was not yet twenty-five years old: in spite of all his vices and faults, we feel some pity, as we draw the veil over the features of this wretched King. He had a heart, he was capable of remorse; he might have been so much better and nobler, had he not come in such times[1]. His last words were touching: 'he rejoiced that he left no heir in such an age: for he knew of his own sad experience how wretched was the state of a child-King; how wretched the kingdom over which a child ruled'; he added that France needed a man for its ruler;—not a Henry of Valois, but a Henry of Navarre.

V. *Fifth War.* A.D. 1547. 1574

Charles IX died just as the Fifth Civil War broke out in the old home of such wars, the southern and western quarters; if indeed it is worthy to be called a war. It is only to be noticed because it brought out with some clearness the weakened state of the Huguenots, and the growing importance of the middle party, which now set itself in opposition to the Crown; it also saw the gradual formation of the League.

When Henry King of Poland received news of his brother's death, his only thought was how to escape from the discomforts of his new throne: he was a man with no sense of duty or of honour, and was only too glad to throw off the disagreeable crown he had so eagerly schemed to obtain, and which he had solemnly sworn to wear for the good of his new subjects. Impatient of delay, he escaped like a fugitive, riding off with a

[1] For a good account of him see De Thou, lib. lvii. tom. viii. p. 605.

small retinue of Frenchmen by night and in secret. The Poles formally summoned him to return, and, when he made no reply, proceeded to declare the Polish throne vacant, and to elect another King[1]. Had Henry hastened back direct to France it might have been said that anxiety for the French crown had prompted his hurried flight. This, however, was not the case; for he turned aside, and passed through Moravia and Austria into Italy; perhaps he did not care to recross Germany and once more to face those reproachful, plain-spoken Princes and fugitives. In Italy he amused himself three months, leaving his mother in charge of France, and wasting his time, strength, and substance in idleness and debauch.

When he drew towards Languedoc, Montmorency-Damville its governor came to meet him, and did his best to persuade him to throw himself on the Politiques, and with their help to hold a middle place between the parties. To accept this policy would be to break loose from the House of Lorraine and his old line of action; and this, though the great Cardinal died soon after this time[2], was more than he could be induced to do. From Dauphiny he issued a first proclamation, declaring that he would make no concession to the Huguenots,—Catholic they must become, or they must leave the realm. Louis XIV in his most imperious days could use no stronger language. Wherever he went he flaunted before the people his ardent Catholicism; processions, prayers, church festivals, had no attendant so devout: he was ever either sinning or doing penance for his sins; and it was hard to say in which he showed the greater fervour. He attached himself in policy, in opinion, and by marriage, to the dominant House of Guise. He made no attempt to put an end to the loose irregular war which was eating up the vitals of the kingdom:

[1] They elected Stephen Bathory, Waiwode of Transylvania, 15 Dec. 1575.

[2] He died suddenly in December, 1574, of a chill caught in a great procession of penitents. There were, of course, immediate rumours of poison. The next day came a terrific storm. His friends said it betokened the anger of Heaven at France, now bereft of the sheltering prayers of the Cardinal; but the Huguenots said Hell was unchained to meet its greatest guest. Such was the political temper of the time. Mémoires de Pierre L'Estoile (Michaud, II. i. 1. p. 49).

and his court was more bestial and corrupt than anything France had seen for ages. Nothing could be more scandalous and effeminate than this idle King: he and his unworthy favourites made night hideous within and abroad in the streets: the home of bloodshed and intrigue, of love and murder, of the worst passions in fullest licence,—such was the Court of Henry III. When his amusements were not vicious, they were criminal; if not criminal, puerile. All parties alike fell off from him: in him the French monarchy reached its lowest point. The Protestants and Politiques made common cause and a definite compact; and they were followed, on the other side, by a similar combination of the Catholics: the Politique-Huguenot confederation of Milhaud in 1575 was answered by the Catholic League of 1576.

The compact of Milhaud was the first definite agreement between Huguenots and moderate Catholics; at that place the Calvinist churches had met (Feb. 1575) and had elected as their chief the Prince of Condé, then a fugitive in Germany; and before the meeting broke up Montmorency-Damville sent them a formal offer of alliance. It was accepted with joy. The combined party sprang up at once to formidable dimensions; a manifesto was put out claiming freedom of conscience, and the convocation of the States General: it was a new feudalism, defying the weakened crown. To this great party Alençon, who had escaped from Court, forthwith attached himself; he was at once accepted as head of the party. England should give money, Germany men: zealous John Casimir the Palsgrave was to march into Eastern France, and to undertake the administration of the Three Bishoprics; and Condé was ready to return from Germany with a powerful army.

Henry, Duke of Guise, Governor of Champagne, set himself to stem the incursion of the Germans; in so doing he got that wound in the cheek which gave him his father's nickname, le Balafré [1], the scarred. Elsewhere no effective resistance was made. The Queen Mother, seeing that the Monarchy was

[1] His father, Duke Francis, had won this honourable name in 1545, when wounded in the face at the siege of Boulogne.

perishing, tried to make peace. War however dragged on its weary length through the spring of 1576; Condé and the Elector Palatine entered France with eighteen thousand men, crossed the Duchy of Burgundy, and joined Alençon at Moulins: Montmorency-Damville was unopposed in the South: Henry of Navarre at last escaped from Paris, rejoined his friends, and threw aside his forced Catholicism. His appearance in the camp of the Politique-Huguenot army is the true beginning of his great career. Hitherto, with the Court, he had taken his full share of all frivolity and debauchery; it was time that the greater qualities of the man should appear, and that he should show himself the son not only of pleasure-loving feeble Antony, but also of the stern heroic Jeanne.

The Court could do nothing; even the strict Catholics stood aloof; Catherine could only negociate and treat. The upshot was another hollow peace, the 'Paix de Monsieur,' as the Duke of Alençon now began to be called[1], the Peace of Chastenoy (6 May, 1576). The Huguenots obtained freedom of worship throughout the realm, except in Paris; they got possession of some strong towns in the South; of the right to establish schools and hold synods; and an equal share in the Parliaments. The Politiques also secured great concessions for their chiefs; for Henry of Navarre the government of Guyenne; for Condé Picardy; for Alençon Anjou, Touraine, and Berry, together with all his appanages.

Terms so favourable to the nobles and Calvinists could not be acquiesced in without a struggle. If the King yielded, the high Catholic party would not; against one League they would oppose another: the true Wars of the League begin.

Since the days of the Triumvirate the Guises had kept in view the idea of a great Catholic League, which should be built up on the basis of the interests of the great nobles of their side, and of the popular hatred against Calvinism. The instruments of its

[1] From this time the King's brother next himself in age begins to be called 'Monsieur' alone; Gaston, brother of Louis XIII, was 'the first son of France who was truly and constantly styled "Monsieur" quite short.' S. Simon, iv. p. 358.

action should be the rising Jesuit order; for foreign supports and stays it should have the Pope and the King of Spain. From time to time partial and secret unions had been formed, chiefly in the North of France. The policy of the Guises, as foreshadowed by the Cardinal of Lorraine at the Council of Trent[1], fell in with the violent passions of the high Catholic party, and was forwarded by the contempt into which the Court had fallen. Little isolated leagues had been formed in the provinces as early as 1563[2], but were broken up or died out, though from time to time, as in 1565 and 1572, they sprang up again. Not till 1576 did the 'Holy Union,' the League properly so called, come into existence[3]. When Henry, Duke of Guise, saw what high and almost independent position had been granted to the great confederates, Anjou, Henry of Navarre, and Damville, by the late Peace, he began to consider whether it was not time for him too on his side to secure himself, and to make sure that he could stand firmly without or against Court and King: he may have dreamt of even more; at any rate his more obscure and violent friends did, for they kept up the old language about the Karoling origin[4] of the Guises, and the papers of the lawyer David[5] show the thoroughness of the scheme: these documents have a curious antiquarian flavour about them, suggesting a parallel between the rois fainéants in the hands of the Karoling Mayors and the feeble Henry giving up the reins of government to the Guises: 'Finally,' he says, 'the Duke of Guise, with advice of the Pope, and as Pepin treated Hilderik[6], will shut up the King in a

[1] Above, p. 323. [2] Anquetil, Esprit de la Ligue, ii. p. 171.

[3] The negociations with Philip II did not take a serious form till 1583, when the death of Anjou brought the succession-question into greater prominence, and Philip became perforce a principal in the strife. In January, 1585 the foreign element was distinctly represented in a compact between the Guises, Philip, and the Papacy: about the same time the alliance with the 'Sixteen' gave the League a new and all-important centre at Paris.

[4] As a fact this absurd appeal to the Karoling ancestors was of no value for the Guises: they were only the younger branch: the Duke of Lorraine was between them and that succession.

[5] These papers have been called a forgery of the Huguenots to discredit the Guises; it is more probable that they were genuine, though not the work of the Princes, but only of some hot-headed partisan.

[6] See Vol. i. p. 109.

monastery for the rest of his days[1].' The Church, and more particularly the Company of Jesus, which was now in the very flush of its earlier success, warmly seconded the Duke. The Jesuits formed the cosmopolitan and almost anti-national element in the combination; they were in a certain sense the radical party of the age. They were aided by the network of official influences, which, for a very large part of France, had, since the days of Henry II, been entirely in the hands of the Lorraine-family. That Condé should step into office in Picardy, the very heart of the Catholic districts, seemed to them monstrous and impossible.

Consequently, D'Humières, who commanded on the Upper Somme, at Peronne, Roye, and Montdidier, directly he heard that Peronne would be Condé's head-quarters, gathered round him the ill-affected nobles, ecclesiastics, and burghers of Picardy to defend high Catholic interests in the North: they loudly professed their loyalty to Henry III, and steadfastly refused to do his bidding. The League was the immediate result: its principles were drawn up in twelve articles[2], which were circulated secretly; they are very clear and significant. The object of the League is stated in the first article: it is styled an Association of Catholic princes, lords, and gentlemen with a view to the restoration and upholding of the sole supremacy of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church: so far it is a simple Church Defence society: the second clause goes much farther:—though they profess that they will support Henry III, they declare it shall be only in subordination to the coming States General: in the third article we find the antiquarian claims and aims of the Guises peeping through: they will restore to the Provinces of the realm and the provincial Estates such rights and privileges as they had in the days of 'the King Clovis, first Christian King, together with still better and more profitable liberties and franchises, if such can be found.' The remaining articles declare that the combination is intended for fighting purposes: they

[1] Anquetil, Esprit de la Ligue, ii. p. 182.
[2] Given in full by Palma Cayet, Collect. Univ. lv. pp. 3, sqq.

threaten as enemies all who shall hold aloof, all who resist, all who fall away; they promise obedience to their chosen head; they make arrangements for the secret spread of the League. Finally, the twelfth article contains the Oath to be taken on joining 'The Holy Catholic Association,' an oath which distinctly sets the authority of the League above even that of the King.

It is, in short, a great League of the Catholic noblesse, supported by clergy and populace, and opposed to the confederacy of the Huguenot Princes, who were helped by the moderate party and the burghers of the South. It spread like lightning over the whole face of France: Condé could find no footing in Picardy or even in Poitou; Henry of Navarre was refused entrance into Bordeaux itself: the heads of the League, the family-party of the Dukes of Guise, Mayenne, and Aumâle, seemed to carry all before them; the weak King leant towards them; the Queen Mother, intriguing ever, succeeded in separating Anjou from the Politiques, and began to seduce Damville. She hoped once more to isolate the Huguenots and to use the League to weaken and depress them.

The Confederates had previously called for a convocation of the States General; the Leaguers now did the same: Henry III himself thought that he might gain some strength from their meeting. They were therefore summoned, and met at Bloisin, December, 1576. The new machinery of the League was set in motion, and the Estates at first seemed to be entirely composed of its friends: the Huguenot Princes refused to sit, and sent only envoys to watch proceedings and protest. The King showed himself hotly opposed to the confederates of the South: the Court and the League seemed to be in perfect harmony, the King even approved of the steps taken 'by those of Picardy,' and, in a way, subscribed to the League, though the twelve articles had to be considerably modified before they were shown to him.

The Estates soon showed that there was no true unanimity in favour of a policy of repression, which must mean civil war. In many districts the bureaux named to draw up the gravamina

either adjourned the religious question, or declared in favour of peace: there was but one man of commanding ability in the whole assembly, and his whole weight was exercised in favour of peace and moderation. This was John Bodin of Anjou, who, settled at Laon, had been returned to the Tiers État for the Vermandois district, and who, in the very heart of the League country, had succeeded in getting the whole religious question deferred; who also, in the discussions which took place, gradually guided the Third Estate so prudently and sagaciously as to neutralise the whole influence of the war-party[1]. A feeling against the foreigners, the Queen's Italians, the Spanish Jesuits, the Lorrainers themselves, began to show itself: it was seen that even in its strongest districts the League was not all-powerful: Amiens refused to join it; even in Paris it met with stiff opposition; in many places it was distinctly unpopular. The Third Estate boldly refused to vote the 'One Religion' clause, and declared for peace: it went further, and, so far as it could, stopped the supplies: the King, amazed at this unexpected resistance, declared that as the requisite funds were refused him, he could not follow out his intention of securing one religion in the realm, and dismissed the Estates.

TABLE VI.—THE HOUSE OF GUISE.

CLAUDE I,
Count of Aumâle, Duke of Guise (created 1527) + 1550

- **Francis**, Duke of Guise (le balafré), assassinated, 1563
  - **Henry I**, Duke of Guise (le balafré), assassinated, 1588
    - **Charles**, Duke of Guise, + 1640
      - **Henry**, Duke of Guise, + 1664.
  - **Charles**, Duke of Mayenne, + 1611
    - **Henry**, Duke of Mayenne, + 1621.
  - **Louis**, Cardinal of Lorraine, Archbishop of Rheims, assassinated, 1588.
- **Charles**, Cardinal of Lorraine.
- **Claude II**, Duke of Aumâle (created 1547)
  - **Charles**, Duke of Aumâle, + 1631.

[1] Martin, Histoire de France, ix. p. 458.

VI. *Sixth War.* A.D. 1577.

The Leaguers had succeeded in making war, and winning some successes: now on their heels came the Court with fresh negociations for peace. Though the heart's desire of the King was to crush the stubborn Huguenots, and to destroy the moderates: still he was afraid to act; and so it came about that, though Anjou was won away from them, and compromised on the other side, and though Damville also deserted them, and though the whole party was in the utmost disorder and seemed likely to disperse, still the Court offered them such terms that in the end they seemed even to have recovered ground. Under the walls of Montpellier, Damville, the King's general, and Châtillon, the Admiral's son, at the head of the Huguenots, were actually manœuvring to begin a battle, when La Noue came up bearing tidings of peace, and at the imminent risk of being shot threw himself between the two armies, to stay their uplifted hands. It was the Peace of Bergerac (17 Sept. 1577), another ineffectual truce, which once more granted in the main what that of Chastenoy had already promised: it is needless to say that the League would have none of it; partisan-warfare, almost objectless, however destructive to the country, went on without a break: the land was overrun by adventurers and bandits, sure sign of political death. Nothing could be more brutalising or more brutal: and yet the savage traits of civil war are less revolting than the ghastly revelries of the Court. All the chiefs were alike—neither the King, nor Henry of Navarre, nor Anjou, nor even the strict Catholic Guise, disdained to wallow in debauch. Death, moral and physical, brooded over the country: orgies and murders, perfumes and blood, savage and dissolute women, effeminate and bloodstained men, met the eye at every turn: no virtue, no faith, no patriotism remained: France was a loathsome body, galvanised into a ghastly life in death. It was from this Court, not because he wearied of it, but because he had quarrelled with his brother, and dreaded the ever-ready dagger of the bravo, that Francis Duke of Anjou fled, in the beginning of 1578, to Angers,

where, finding that there was a prospect of amusement in the Netherlands, he turned his back on the high Catholics, and renewed friendship with the Huguenot chiefs. He was invited to come to the rescue of the distressed Calvinists in their struggle against Philip, and appeared in the Netherlands in July 1578. The ten revolted Southern Provinces declared him 'Defender of their liberties,' and rallied round him with fresh hopes: he had wealth, he was a possible, even a likely, spouse for Queen Elizabeth: the Belgic provinces had dreams of a restored Burgundian power, Catholic, brilliant, independent of both Spain and France. It was, however, a poor reed on which to lean; and had the Northern provinces not been stout and strong, and independent of the Southern, it might have been fatal to the whole resistance[1].

[1] The dates of the movement in the Netherlands are these:—

1555, Oct. Philip succeeds his father Charles V. The Duke of Savoy, Philibert, is Governor.

1559. Margaret of Parma, Regent. Disturbances against the Spanish Inquisition and Granvella's policy, supported by William of Orange and Egmont.

1561. Granvella made Archbishop of Mechlin, representative of the new episcopate.

1565. Severities of Philip, to introduce the Tridentine Decrees, backed by the Inquisition.

1566. The 'Compromise of Breda' presented to the Regent: the *Geusen*, or Land-beggars, 300 nobles, who had signed that remonstrance.

1567. Alva in the Netherlands: Margaret resigns: Orange escapes.

1568. Great severities: Horn and Egmont beheaded. Unsuccessful attempts of William of Orange and Louis of Nassau.

1572. The Water-beggars seize Brill and Flushing: Holland and Zealand revolt.

1574. Requesens, the governor, fails at Leyden: William of Orange defeats the Spanish fleet at Middelburg; Louis of Nassau defeated and killed at Mooker.

1576. Requesens dies; Don John of Austria succeeds. The 'Pacification of Ghent' signed between the Northern and the Southern Provinces. Archduke Matthias invited to be Governor.

1578. Don John of Austria defeats him. The Provinces get rid of Matthias, and the Belgic or Southern Provinces elect the Duke of Anjou, hoping to revive the Burgundian power.

1579. The seven Northern Provinces form the Union of Utrecht; the ten Southern, in the main, submit to the Duke of Parma, as Viceroy of Spain.

1581. Declaration of Independence of the Seven United Provinces: Francis, Duke of Anjou, named as Sovereign; William of Orange, Statholder.

It is impossible to write the history of these odious wars: memory and imagination both revolt. It is like a scene from a new Inferno: the Court with its horrible amusements, now devout, now sunk in the lowest and most unnatural sins, and always God-forsaken, forms the centre of the picture: the figure of Catherine de' Medici, like a busy witch, broods over the seething cauldron: far off on the horizon rise clouds of war, the smoke of burning cities and ruined villages: we dimly discern combatants passing in and out, though we can see no plan or aim, no general of note, no solid army. Even Henry of Navarre as yet shows but small capacity. The only element in French society that inspires respect is the group of great lawyers, who laboriously, throughout this desolate age, pile up a grand series of Ordinances. From the Edict of Villars Cotterets, to that of Moulins in 1566, thence onward to that of Blois in 1580, we have steady progress of reforms in the administration of the country, doubtless far too bureaucratic in character, yet still of infinite value in the confusion and chaos of civil life in France.

VII. *Seventh War.* A.D. 1579.

Though Henry III in a Conference at Nérac (A.D. 1579) did his best to satisfy the King of Navarre, still those Huguenots who had already tasted the sweets of civil war were eager to begin again: they wished for war for its own sake, for plunder, adventure, revenge, not to advance some noble cause, or to secure the triumph of a wholesome principle. Each year we see the temper of the combatants growing worse; this Seventh War, 'the Gallants' War[1],' sprang out of a mean intrigue. Henry III stooped to set afloat a scandalous tale, intended, by damaging the character of his own sister, to sow discord between her and her spouse Henry of Navarre. But the slanderous whisper,

1583. Anjou retires into France, utterly disgraced. The ten Provinces almost entirely reduced by Parma.
1584. Orange assassinated: Anjou dies.

[1] 'La guerre des amoureux.'

instead of having this effect, only drew the two together, by the bonds of a desire to punish the mean and shameless conduct of the King: it formed the pretext for this Seventh War. The wiser and better of the Huguenot party would gladly have kept the peace; but the 'gallants,' the frivolous youths who formed the petty court of Henry of Navarre, were set on more fighting. So the war came; in which the Catholics had by far the best of it; the insurgents were weaker than ever, and hopes of extinguishing them rose high.

And now a fresh disturbing cause, in this wretched entanglement of public and private interests, entered in and changed the aspect of affairs. Towards the latter part of 1580 the seven United Provinces offered the sovereignty over themselves to the Duke of Anjou; and he, longing for a fresh field for his ambition, urged his brother to come to terms with the Huguenots. Peace was signed at Fleix, 26 November, 1580: the terms were those of Bergerac unchanged.

The Duke of Anjou took advantage of this peace to collect a good force with which to make head against the Duke of Parma in the Walloon Provinces: Philip II saw with astonishment this revival of the plans and policy of Coligny, which he had thought long since dead and gone: but Henry III assured him that he had no hand in it, that it was Anjou's affair: and Philip was not prepared to make matters worse by quarrelling with France. The chief Huguenots followed Anjou across the border; and it looked as if the young Duke would have a great career before him: in truth, had he been a man of nobler character he might have successfully asserted the liberties of the Provinces, and, in close alliance with England, might have held the seventeen together, as a compact and flourishing nation with a free and vigorous life before it. But Anjou was not fit for much. Queen Elizabeth refused to give him her hand; for she saw that this last-born of the Valois had not the ring of true metal in him: the English help came not: the force he brought from France was of no avail: he was indolent and incapable, and neither knew nor cared to know how to secure the Dukedom of

Brabant and County of Flanders. On every field the Duke of Parma overpowered him; it was a strong man wrestling with a babe: and in spite of William of Orange's help and advice, in spite of a fine army sent to his support by Catherine under the Duke of Montpensier, in spite of the warm enthusiasm of the people, nothing prospered with him. At last, with the instincts of a weak tyrant, he tried to secure for his own purposes the chief strongholds in the southern provinces, and to surprise them all at one blow[1]: his traitorous scheme failed at the most important places; then, having scandalously betrayed his trust, and finding himself deserted by all, he escaped to France. Thence he negociated with the Provinces, and was on the point of returning to them, when the hereditary disease of the Valois struck him down: he died of consumption at the age of thirty, in the year 1584.

During these years the power of the great lords in France had grown greater, while that of the Crown was dragged through the dust. In the wrong way at the wrong time, Henry III thought to exalt 'new men,' his favourites, such as the Dukes of Joyeuse and Epernon, as counterpoises to the great nobles. But his new men had no genius nor virtue, and did but add to his humiliation. The League grew more threatening: the gloomy figure of Philip of Spain was seen darkly behind it; by means of this fanatic party he avenged himself on France for the annoyance Anjou had caused him in the Netherlands. It was believed that the Spanish King was about to carry out his long-planned crusade against all Protestantism; that his eye was on England, on the United Provinces, on France herself; that he proposed to assassinate Elizabeth and William of Orange, and in union with the League to enter France, and depose Henry the foolish King[2].

[1] This was 'the folly of Antwerp,' as it was called.

[2] See the account of the Salcède Conspiracy in Anquetil, Esprit de la Ligue, ii. p. 236.

CHAPTER VI.

Eighth and last War, the 'War of the Three Henries.' A.D. 1584–1589.

In the darkest days of France, and in the midst of her worst corruptions, there are always some noble natures who rise out of the mists into a higher and purer atmosphere. Such men as L'Hôpital, or Coligny, or Du Plessis Mornay, by force of character or position, out from the dreary present see into a hopeful future, and are able to give those impulses which save France from perishing. Toleration with L'Hôpital, resistance to Spain with Coligny, and now the consolidation of the country by the hand of Henry of Navarre, as it was foreshadowed by Du Plessis Mornay;—these were the three foundations on which the France of the future might be built up: and Henry of Navarre, born of a Catholic father and Huguenot mother, and by disposition rather indifferent than tolerant[1], was destined to restore peace between the parties at home, and to make the name of France formidable abroad.

As yet he had shown scarcely any sign of greatness to the outer world. Some stern lesson, some crisis in life, was needed to purge away the dross which clogged his character: and the time was now near at hand. The death of the Duke of Anjou in 1584 changed all the prospects of the succession to the French throne; Henry III was not likely to leave any children behind him, and was the last of the Valois branch. Henry of

[1] Montaigne declared that neither Henry nor his rival Henry of Guise cared aught for their religion: 'C'est un beau prétexte pour se faire suivre par ceux de leur parti; mais la religion ne les touche ni l'un ni l'autre.' Michaud, I. xi. p. 265.

Navarre therefore now became next heir in the hereditary succession, and the King sent to him the Duke of Epernon, his favourite, whose views were those of the Politique party[1], to pray him to become a Catholic once more, and so to remove the one obstacle to his recognition. All the moderate Catholics besought him to take this step: his own convictions were but slight; the advantages seemed great. Yet the young King of Navarre, after some wavering, would not do it. It was well that he did not: for, from the political point of view, it would have been premature: the Huguenots would have attached themselves at once to the Prince of Condé, and Henry would have lost their support: his own stem-idea was toleration, which placed an iron barrier between him and the strict Catholics; neither Paris nor the Guises would have joined him: the moderate Catholics had not yet shown strength enough for him to float on them alone in the troubled sea of French politics. He therefore wisely chose to continue standing at the head of the Huguenot party, cultivating at the same time friendly relations with those nobles who, though Catholic, disliked the Spanish-Guise line of policy. He waited patiently, and as the event showed, wisely, for the natural development of a patriotic and national feeling, which at the right moment he might make his own by a well-timed conversion.

In these years, from 1584 to 1586, his character grew in force and earnestness: these are the days of his conversion from boyish carelessness to a manly determination, to a clear view of his destiny, and a readiness to sacrifice himself for it. To compel reluctant France to accept toleration, firmly yet not cruelly to reduce chaos to order, securing his own throne and ruling like a true King, to stamp out the embers of party-fires, and to show himself to be the head not of this or of that faction, not of this or of that religion, but of France as a whole:—this was the arduous task for which Henry of Navarre now began to brace himself.

[1] While the Duke of Joyeuse, his rival-favourite, went with the high Catholic party.

At the very time that Henry III was urging him to return to the Catholics, he also received a letter, breathing a very different spirit, from Du Plessis Mornay. That great man, a keen Calvinist, a good soldier, an eloquent writer, a man of noble aim and life, at this time filled the place of Coligny, with even higher moral elevation, and greater breadth of political views. He had but lately presented to Henry III a memoir on 'the best way to lessen the greatness of Spain[1]': he now turned to Henry of Navarre, and saluting him as heir to the throne of France, besought him to show that he was conscious of his high vocation. No longer should he waste his moral strength on disorderly attachments: now he must love first all Christendom, and nex his country[2]. Though Henry never rose to the moral height required of him, yet we do not again find him sharing in royal revels, or sinking to the level of the low debauches of the Valois. He ceases to be a mere partisan, becomes a great leader, a wise politician, a brilliant general; after a while, a splendid Monarch.

The prospect before him was very gloomy: the Huguenots were weak; the Politiques and Henry III wavered; the Spanish party was full of confidence and high schemes. It was in 1585 that, on receiving news of the Treaty of Nemours[3], Henry, as he himself told the Marquis de la Force, 'thinking deeply thereon, with his head resting on his hand, felt so heavily on his soul the apprehension of evils impending over his friends, that half his beard and moustache turned white[4].' It was the moment of

[1] Martin, Hist. de France, ix. p. 523.

[2] Mémoires de Du Plessis-Mornai, i. p. 355.

[3] See below, p. 384.

[4] Matthieu, Histoire de France, i. p. 501 (ed. 1631). This is that moustache which afterwards figured on the French revolutionary soldier's upper lip, as Lenoir (Musée des Monumens Français, Paris, 1801, An. x.) tells us. At the exhumation of Henry's body which took place in 1793, it was found perfectly sound: and 'Un soldat, qui était présent, mu par un martial enthousiasme au moment de l'ouverture du cercueil, se précipita sur le cadavre du vainqueur de la ligue, et après un long silence d'admiration, il tira son sabre, lui coupa une longue mèche de la barbe, qui était encore fraîche, s'écria en même temps, en termes énergiques et vraiment militaires, "Et moi aussi je suis soldat français, désormais je n'aurai plus d'autre moustache (en placant cette mèche précieuse sur sa lèvre supérieure); maintenant je suis sûr de vaincre les ennemis de la France, et je marche à la victoire." Il se retira.'

his lowest depression: the turning-point which led to all his triumphs.

Henry of Navarre was born at Pau, capital of the Béarnais, in 1553, and his birth, infancy, and youth were, one might think, fashioned on the Gargantua of Rabelais: his old grandfather, Henry of Albret, was a thorough Pantagruelist, who had made his will and hung it round his neck in a golden box; and, when his daughter Jeanne was curious to know its contents, she received a promise that her desire should be gratified, if, when the time came for her child to be born, she would sing a Béarn song. This the brave mother did: the old man, delighted with her spirit, hung the much-coveted box round her neck, though he carried away the key in his pocket: he then took up the new-born babe, rubbed its little gums with a head of garlic, and finally gave it a taste of wine from his cup[1]. They cradled him in a great turtle-shell[2]. Thus came Henry of Navarre into the world: they named him after his grandfather. We learn from Palma Cayet what was the rough wild life of the boy; he runs about with village lads, barefooted, bareheaded, with hair unkempt in the fresh air, winter or summer alike[3], sometimes toiling like a labourer's son, eating heartily the coarse bread of the district, bold and blunt, yet full of a natural grace of manner, which commended him to courtiers and to friends. What greater contrast could there be to those four decrepit boys, the Valois-Medicean brothers! These stronger elements of his early training stood him in good stead in the perilous days now coming.

The League-party was quite clear that he must never reign in France: by war, by intrigue, by political writings, they would bar the way. Consequently, we owe to this time a decided advance in the study of principles of politics: the Jesuit-

[1] Palma Cayet, preceptor to Catherine of Bourbon, Henry IVth's sister, had ample opportunities of gathering these details. Collection Universelle, lvi. p. 104.

[2] Still shown at Pau.

[3] 'Quelquesfois pieds descaux et nue teste, tant en hyver qu'en esté.' Palma Cayet, lvi. p. 109.

party, naturally allied, except in its trading days, to intellectual radicalism, now broached theories as to the sovereignty of the people, the reflexion of which we may even trace in the conservative pages of Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity. The existence of Elizabeth as a Protestant Sovereign in England, and of Henry of Navarre as heir to the throne of the most Christian King of France, quickly convinced high Catholic minds that thrones cannot be transmitted by strict hereditary right: they therefore posited a 'divine right' of Kings, very different from that soon to be set up in England: their 'divine right' was the doctrine that no heretic could reign; that the Church had the ultimate authority in matters of succession. It is a doctrine which in a strangely changed shape, reappears in the Protestant Succession compact by which the House of Hanover came to and still holds the English throne.

Is monarchy based on hereditary right? or on the will of the people? or on the sanction of the Church? these are the three points debated hotly by pen and sword during these years. In France, where the bulk of the people was Catholic, where Paris was fanatically so, the Jesuit writers did not fail to see that the second and third questions, that of popular election, and that of orthodoxy in the candidate for the throne, could be combined in one, and answered in harmony: thus grouped they might hope to resist the old-established claims of hereditary succession, which, however weakened by the immense gap separating Valois from Bourbon, was still stronger in France than elsewhere in Europe.

To advance these views, Bernardino da Mendoza, Philip's envoy, who had just been ejected from England, was sent to Paris. He was a very firebrand, and his task was to kindle the inflammable materials gathered round the Guises and in Paris. The Parisian League now sprang up, and stretched out its hands to the Duke of Guise: it was agreed that the heretic of Navarre should be shut out from the throne, and the 'Mignons' of Henry III, Joyeuse and Epernon, banished from the Court. The critical question, Who then shall be King? was adjourned

by the clever expedient of putting forward the old Cardinal Bourbon (uncle of Henry of Navarre), a wretched creature, decrepit and debauched, a gambler and a sot. Under his shadow the Duke of Guise hoped to prepare for his own succession to the throne, excluding not only Henry of Navarre, but the elder Lorraine branch as well[1]. With a view to this end Guise sold himself to Philip of Spain.

That shrewd tenacious monarch saw, as he believed, the crisis of his fortunes coming on, and all things favouring. The Jesuit theory of assassination had been practically tried on William the Silent in 1584, and the United Provinces were staggering from the blow; Philip believed that their reduction was near at hand. Plots innumerable were laid against the persons of Queen Elizabeth and Henry of Navarre: there were also plots to lay hands on James VI, heir to the English throne, so as to secure him to Catholicism or to prevent his reigning; there were plots also to embarrass Elizabeth on the Irish side. Pamphlets, songs, gross prints, teemed from the French presses; Rheims, where there was an English-Catholic seminary, was the centre of this evil activity; the air was full of lies. Spenser, in his wonderful description of the wood of Error, and of the monster its denizen, with her filthy brood of lies, 'Her vomit full of books and papers was,' refers to this moment[2]: it was to meet guile with guile, spy with spy, that the subtle Walsingham now organised his wide-reaching system of intelligences, and of anti-Spanish plots and plans[3]. On the last day of 1584, the Pact of Joinville was signed between the Dukes of Guise and Mayenne, Philip's envoys, and a representative of Cardinal Bourbon: heretics were to be excluded from the throne, and the Treaty of Cateau-Cambresis to be taken as the basis of all dealings with Spain. The mere name of that treaty shows how unpatriotic, even how anti-national the Leaguers had

[1] See Table V. p. 251.

[2] Spenser, Faery Queene, I. Canto i. St. 20. The passage was first published in 1590.

[3] See Michelet, x. pp. 168, 169 (ed. 1856).

become: they were entirely subjected to the power and interests of Spain. The Papal blessing came in February, 1585.

On the other side, the Dutch and English offered to help and guarantee Henry III on his throne if he would follow out Coligny's policy, and unite again the bands which the S. Bartholomew Massacre had snapped. The League set itself to hinder the King, if not to overthrow him, or to carry him off: the scissors were shown with which he was to be shorn and made a monk, so clearing the place for the Karolingian Guises.

Now came out a great State paper, the Manifesto of the League: it should be read side by side with the splendid Declaration of Independence made by William the Silent, which had been before the world since 1581. This manifesto, which was signed by the Cardinal Bourbon, received the adhesion of the Duke of Lorraine, the elder branch not thinking it well to allow the younger branch, the Guises, to have in their hands the sole management of the party. Troubles broke out over the whole face of France; in most places the Leaguers were easily dominant, though they failed in Provence, in some scattered towns of Burgundy, at Bordeaux and Toulouse.

What would the King do? Montmorency drew to the Huguenots: a common danger once more attracted the moderate Catholics and the Calvinists together; and a very strong party would have welcomed Henry III as its head, had he been willing to act with them. But he hated the Huguenots, politically, religiously, morally: he listened to his chief favourite, Joyeuse: the Queen Mother, who had schemes of her own for the succession, was jealous of Henry of Navarre, and now leant towards the Guises. Even Margaret of Valois, Henry's unworthy and dissolute spouse, deserted him and became a Leaguer. Paris had throughout, in spite of a strong minority of Moderates, been a violent partisan of the high Catholics: she now proposed to go a step farther, and to become once more the centre of a strict Catholic kingdom, and to impose her will, in the reactionary direction, on France. Since the time of Francis I she had been organised more completely: she had a 'Provost of the Tradesmen' and

four 'echevins,' elected by the citizens; the town was divided into 'quarters' or districts, each of which had its commandant. From each of these quarters one man was chosen by the secret council of the League, and these, the famous 'Sixteen of Paris[1],' soon gathered to themselves great power: they were mostly lawyers, ambitious and fanatical. They called for the King's deposition, and invited Henry, Duke of Guise, to Paris. Even now, had the King shown resolution and vigour, he could have done much, and might have made a good fight for the independence of his Crown. But to what could such a wavering enervated creature rouse himself? How could he fight against his favourites, his superstitions, his religious tendencies? He gave way, and authorised the Queen Mother to make such terms as she could with the League and the Sixteen. Her terms were a capitulation: the monarchy bowed its head, and became subject to its subjects. At Nemours (5 July, 1585) was signed a treaty, which sanctioned all that had been done by the Leaguers, promised the total revocation of all edicts of toleration, forbade the exercise of Huguenot worship, and granted huge concessions to the great Princes, to Cardinal Bourbon, to Aumâle, Mercœur, Guise and Mayenne. A gleam of popularity greeted the King as he entered Paris, and in the Parliament: but at what a price had he bought it! He was King no more of France; only nominal head of an unpatriotic faction.

The first step in the coming war was characteristic: the League-party induced the new Pope, Sixtus V, that splendid example of the force of great natural powers, that king of men, —who, being a true autocrat, had disapproved of the League-programme,—to excommunicate both 'the Béarnais,' as they called Henry of Navarre, and Condé, and to declare them incapable of succeeding, and to entrust to Henry III the task of deposing him from his Southern crown. The King of Navarre replied with a coarse and scornful protest, and war began.

Like his grandson Vendôme after him, Henry rose highest in a great emergency: he was never so active, or to all appear-

[1] Palma Cayet, Collect. Univ. lv. pp. 27 sqq.; and Ranke, Päpste, v. § 10.

ances so cheerful. He kept up communications with Henry III, professing his loyalty; issued addresses, concerted measures with the middle party, and appealed to Queen Elizabeth, who promised help in the Netherlands, and subsidies for a German army. She knew that the struggle was for life and death: with a firm hand and ready eye, she watched the oncoming of her great foe. All men regarded England as the stronghold of Protestantism and liberty: all knew that Philip thought it such, and was making ready for the great and decisive assault.

Now begins the 'war of the Three Henries,' Henry of Valois, King of France; Henry of Bourbon, King of Navarre; and Henry, Duke of Guise, soon to be styled the King of Paris. Bourbon and Guise were the two antagonists, representing each a distinct principle: Henry III fluctuated between them, victim of his own scandalous vices, and of his mother's fatal balancing system.

In 1586, the King of Navarre was at La Rochelle; Condé commanded the Huguenots in Poitou. Things at first went for the League: Condé was defeated, not far from Angers, whither he had rashly penetrated through a hostile country: his army was broken up, and he, escaping through Normandy, passed into England, whence he returned to La Rochelle with considerable help. Henry of Navarre stood firmly on the defensive against the Duke of Mayenne, garrisoning his towns, and keeping up a lively partisan-warfare from La Rochelle: the League-army, worn out with fatigue and pestilence, disbanded, and Mayenne, full of suspicions against Henry III, withdrew to Paris.

There was also obscure warfare in the summer of 1586 in Languedoc, where Joyeuse opposed Montmorency; and in Provence, where Épernon defeated Lesdiguières and the Huguenots; the balance of success was here also with Henry III. But the usual weakness was on him: the money raised with great difficulty for the war was squandered on favourites: the Leaguers redoubled their clamours against him, as a secret friend of the Huguenots. He would gladly have made peace: but to what end could such a peace have served? The King

of Navarre knew well that the decision as to peace or war lay not with Henry III but with the Duke of Guise: and, moreover, why think of peace between parties in France, when all Europe was kindling with war? By her activity in the Netherlands, by her dealings with Mary Stewart, in the Spanish colonies and on the Spanish Main, Queen Elizabeth showed that she knew peace to be impossible. The Queen of Scots was tried and condemned in October, 1586, but not till the next February was that fatal step taken, which told the world, as nothing else could have told it, how great was the peril and alarm of the English Queen, and how hopeless all thoughts of conciliation or peace.

Through the summer of 1587 war went on languidly in France, while Philip gathered together his vast Armada for the next year. A German army threatened France from the usual quarter: Henry of Navarre, with a weak force, marched from La Rochelle to the Loire to meet it: Henry III had levied one more army, which he entrusted to his favourite Joyeuse, and sent it to prevent the junction of Huguenots and Germans. The King of Navarre, finding no tidings of the Germans, turned to the south, crossed the Charente, intending to make a great circuit through more friendly country, and so to reach the Germans to the eastward. He was overtaken by Joyeuse at Coutras, where his position was very perilous, for he lay between the King's army and that of the Guyenne noblesse, who were coming up against him: he had but a little force of some six thousand, with three guns, while Joyeuse had nearly double the number; and finally he was between two rivers, the Isle and the Dronne, in the angle of confluence, where defeat would be ruin. On the other hand, the King of Navarre's men were veterans, while Joyeuse had only raw levies: he determined to fight. There was a touch of the Puritan spirit in the temper in which these old soldiers prepared for battle, in the prayer on bended knee, the solemn hymn with which they met the onslaught of the courtiers' army. Their earnestness prevailed: the brave, ill-disciplined army under Joyeuse was utterly defeated,

their commander killed. It was a great triumph for the Huguenots and their chief: for it was their first victory and his; it stamped him as a bold and successful general.

No results however followed from it: Henry made no attempt to join the Germans under Baron Dohna, who, left to themselves, were unable to cope with the Duke of Guise: Guise beat them in October, 1587, at Vimory near Orleans, then in November at Auneau; and drove them out of France with terrible loss. His success in relieving France from this foreign scourge raised his reputation as high as that of Henry of Navarre, whom men blamed for his inaction after Coutras: it is one of the uncertain points of history, whether that inaction arose from the actual weakness of his force, or from the reluctance of his soldiers to march after they had just won so large a booty, or from the charms of the 'fair Corisande,' at whose feet he hastened to lay the trophies of his victory, or from the significant fact that only six days after Coutras Guise had defeated the Germans more than eighty leagues off at Vimory. Perhaps Henry ought to have attempted more: it is hard to think that he could have been successful: it is even possible that after his victory he did not care to tempt the Germans still further into France.

Paris, proud of the achievements of the Duke of Guise, invited him to come thither: the King forbade it—but what availed an order which had no force behind? On the 9th of May, 1588, with a very scanty escort, Guise made triumphal entry into the capital. 'Saul has killed his thousands, but David his ten thousands,' cried the preachers: Saul the self-willed, the disobedient to God, the King whose crown should pass to the more orthodox David of the Catholic party.

He was a vigorous man, of great physical strength and activity; his was a noble personal appearance; he was fair-haired and light of complexion, showing the Germanic type quite clearly. Like all men engaged in the desultory warfare of the age, he was a captain, not a general; a party-leader, not a statesman; he could bear the hardships of campaigning with

his men; his ways were singularly winning; all who saw him loved him. He became in an instant the idol of the Paris mob, and ruled it as he would. It is fair to add that he was far less sanguinary than his followers. The capital would have destroyed the Swiss guards, and would have proceeded to extremities with the King: but he held them back, and the revolution of 1588 was achieved without cruelties or bloodshed. The King had shown a disposition to resist: he drew his Swiss and his body guards closer round him. The city was instantly crossed with barricades concentric round the Louvre; the Parisians showing their natural gift for street-warfare. The burghers attacked the Swiss and drove in the outposts: the foreigners laid down their arms. The citizens would then have assaulted the King in the Louvre; but Guise stayed them while he negociated, and, as thorough master of the situation, dictated his terms to the Queen Mother. She, artful and clever to the end, debated these terms with him: spun out the affair, amused the Duke, till Henry had time to escape out of Paris: as he passed the Nesle Gate, the citizens fired on him: he turned, and, irritated at the ingratitude of the city, swore he would never re-enter Paris, unless it were through the breach. He protested that he had 'done the city more good than ten of his predecessors;' he was the first King for many years past who had made Paris his royal residence; yet the mob felt nothing but hatred for the lukewarm King; they had learnt by seeing to despise him; they 'blindly followed their Guise, and he was sold to Spain[1].'

Henry escaped to Chartres, and there silently brooded over his wrongs and the vengeance he would take: a small force grew up around him; his ministers joined him; once more for a short while Catherine had staved off the ruin of the House of Valois.

Paris would not be satisfied; the popular movement carried the Duke of Guise with it: all the government of the town was reformed, so as to be in harmony with the League; Politiques

[1] L. von Ranke, Französische Geschichte, i. p. 320.

and Huguenots were proscribed: the anger of the capital against Épernon was especially marked; for he was regarded as the King's most noxious, because most tolerant, favourite. The King, pushed to the utmost peril, granted everything Guise chose to demand: Épernon was dismissed, and lost his government of Normandy; the States General were convoked; Paris received an amnesty for her rebellion; Henry III promised to take up arms for the destruction of heretics, declared that no heretic could succeed to the throne, and named Guise Lieutenant-General of the realm. The edict which contained this capitulation was styled the 'Edict of Union' (1 July, 1588): it meant the utter humiliation of the royal power: it was a 'union' not likely to be long-lived.

The Estates met at Blois in October. So powerful was the League in organisation and in public esteem, that no person professing even moderate opinions was sent thither. It was a representation of the Leaguers, and of them only. Their first step was to humiliate the wretched King still farther: they next declared Henry of Navarre guilty of high-treason and incapable of succeeding to the throne: then they busied themselves with finance. The country was utterly weary of the monetary confusion of these years, and had sent up the deputies not only to make short work of heretics, but to relieve the burdens under which all men groaned. The Estates attacked the financiers, abolished old taxes, refused to impose new ones, ordered expenses for which they made no provision: the King was powerless with them; he might chafe and fret, they would give him no help; his unpaid army melted away: he learnt with the rage of the powerless that the Duke of Savoy, without declaring war, had occupied the marquisate of Saluzzo. The more the luckless King yielded, the less the deputies listened to him: he attributed, no doubt wrongly, everything to the malign influence of the Duke of Guise, and persuaded himself that if he were gone, all would be well, he himself would once more be King. 'He must fall or I,' he cried; 'with the snake the poison dies'; the Italian blood in him was thoroughly roused:

and at last overborne by passion, he decided on ridding himself of his too-powerful rival. Guise, like Coligny, listened to no warnings, and went fearlessly into the King's chamber; there, two days before Christmas, 1588, he was killed by the King's guards; the Cardinal of Guise was arrested in the Council-Chamber, and the next day murdered also; many leaders of the League were seized; the Duke of Mayenne escaped for his life.

Catherine de' Medici knew nothing of this bloodshed; she lay on her deathbed. When Henry III hastened to her with the news, exclaiming, 'I am once more King of France, for I have killed the King of Paris,' the dying woman gathering up her strength replied, 'You have killed the Duke of Guise? God grant you have not thereby made yourself King of nothing.' 'Roy de néant,' how the fainéant title seems to hover round this last of the Valois! The great 'Mayor of the Palace' was dead: but behind Guise was a powerful party, with close organisation and a strong fighting-power; with this the miserable King, in spite of his bootless crime, must still struggle for his crown and life.

All France seemed to revolt at once: the Queen Mother, as if overwhelmed by this last blow, sank rapidly and died (5 January, 1589). She closed her eyes in the darkest moment of her children's career: for this she had intrigued and lied, had struggled and sinned. After all her sacrifices for her family, she must leave all uncertain, all in confusion: the King without any to counsel him, face to face with infuriated France; the question of the succession unsettled; her daughter, wife of the Duke of Lorraine, for whom she had intrigued with all her heart, no nearer to the throne: her last son, last of his race, drawing near to the worst crisis and tragedy of his life.

The new government, with Mayenne at its head, was at once firmly established at Paris; open war was declared on Henry III, whose sole remaining power lay in a few soldiers and a few places on the Loire: almost all the large towns in France revolted. Henry looked round for help, for he was all but powerless;—the whole horizon was dark, save on two points.

On the one side, the power of Spain had suffered a tremendous check in the utter destruction of the great Armada, which had sailed from Lisbon at the end of May, 1588. Not till early in August did it reach the English shores, and it was late autumn ere the last battered relics of the gigantic fleet, having strayed as far as Norway, came straggling back to Spain. The loss in power and wealth was fatal to the influence of the great monarchy: though Philip declared that he would begin again, the past was past, and the opportunity lost for ever. No such effort was again possible for Spain: Philip's ability to interfere in France and in the Netherlands was all but destroyed.

The other ray of light shone from another quarter: Henry of Navarre, who was in Guyenne, alone held up a dauntless head. Though the Huguenots were in great straits, with but a small army, some six thousand strong, and hampered for lack of places of refuge, still the King of Navarre was a power in himself, and his little army was composed of veteran soldiers; lastly, throughout France, lying between Huguenots and Leaguers, was a latent force of national and patriotic feeling which only waited to be called forth. Desperate men will leap far; and Henry III, in spite of old dislikes, and against the whole temper and policy of his life, saw that he must leap the gulf that severed him from Henry of Navarre, if he would find any sound footing among the quicksands on which he trod. The wise manifesto now put out by the King of Navarre was of great service: in vigorous language he spoke to the hearts of all who loved France better than party; he hinted that he might yet be reconciled with Rome; he offered himself as the leader of all who disliked the fierce and foreign policy of the strict Catholics. In April 1589 the helpless King, threatened by Mayenne's army, signed a treaty with the King of Navarre, placing, as a hostage, Saumur in the hands of Du Plessis-Mornay, 'to be held for both Kings.' The two Kings then met at Plessis-lez-Tours, where a century before the one great man of the race of Valois had spent his last sorrowful days. Henry III declared that

he would no longer brand the Huguenots as heretics; Henry of Navarre professed his loyalty to the Crown of France: the royal claims of hereditary right and the principle of toleration joined hands, and set themselves, as from a new standing-ground, to resist the Leaguers' doctrine of popular sovereignty supported by fanatical repression of opinion. The Huguenots gave up all ideas of democratic change; they became an element of the loyal and patriotic party in France.

The face of things changed at once: Huguenots and royalist Catholics hastened to the standard of the two Kings. Mayenne made an attempt on Tours, but was repulsed; the Duke of Aumâle was defeated at Senlis; Longueville, commanding for Henry III, threatened Paris: Mayenne was forced to fall back with all speed on the capital. The Swiss now began to move: they too felt the nearness of the Catholic and menacing power, and saw clearly that their cause was one with that of France. For the Duke of Savoy, after seizing Saluzzo, was threatening Geneva and the Pays de Vaud: the Swiss saw that he was only to be defeated at Paris. Thus the great wave of resistance to the strict Catholic principle, set in fresh motion by the defeat of the Armada the year before, spread across Europe: the onward movement of the Catholic restoration was arrested; an equilibrium between parties seemed not improbable. The Swiss, guided by Harlay de Sancy, whom Henry III had sent to them as his ambassador, joining the Protestant Germans, who were again roused to eagerness, entered North-eastern France; the French nobles in large part rallied round the throne; the Leaguers were unable either to make head against the increasing Germans and Swiss, or to check the Duke of Montpensier on the side of Normandy. The three forces, the King's from the South, the Swiss from the East, Montpensier from the West, when they had made their junction, formed an army of forty thousand men, who marched against Paris and lay at Pontoise. Henry III seemed likely to sate his vengeance on the capital, and to fulfil his threat of entering through the breach; Henry of Navarre wished to strike a blow at the

heart of the League; royalist nobles and Huguenots longed to bring down the pride of Paris, perhaps to enjoy the spoils.

From Pontoise the King came on to S. Cloud, where he took up his head-quarters. The Leaguers were much dispirited: even in the capital there was a strong moderate party, though the majority and the mob were still devoutly Catholic. The defence was languid, in spite of the efforts of the clergy, who even preached assassination. At last, out of this hotbed of fanaticism came forth the instrument prepared for a great crime.

Jacques Clement, a half-witted creature, a jest to his friends, a Dominican friar lately made a priest, a man of a type of character not rarely found in days of high religious excitement, the despised hanger-on and enthusiastic instrument of a determined and fanatical party, had brooded, as all in Paris were brooding, over the changed fortunes of the League, and grew daily more eager to rid the world of the hated King. But he was a priest, and had scruples: higher authority, however, relieved him by the answer that such an act as the assassination of a monarch who had joined hands with heretics might be irregular in a priest, but would not be a mortal sin. Fortified by this authority he set forth from Paris, and walked in his priest's dress to S. Cloud: Henry III, not suspecting evil from one of the sacred race, and perhaps hoping for some offer of submission from the capital, unguardedly allowed him to approach: Jacques drew a dagger from under his sleeve, and plunged it in the King's body. What availed it that the courtiers fell on the priest, and killed him? the deed was done; in a few hours Henry III breathed his last. His last act was to lament the state of France, to commend Henry of Navarre to the nobles round him as his heir, and to exhort that Prince to become Catholic, if he would be King.

In Paris there was a shout of joy[1]: a swarm of scandalous

[1] See L'Estoile's Memoirs, 1589, Collection Michaud, 2me Série, I. ii. p. 3: 'Le peuple .... en porta le deuil vert (qui est la livrée des fous). ..... Elles firent faire aussi des feux de joie partout: tesmoignans par paroles, gestes, accoustremens dissolus, livrées et festins, la grande joie qu'elles en avoient.'

pamphlets came forth; Clement was hailed as a martyr; the League believed itself saved; the city raised its head still higher. The Valois, whose influences on France had ever been so fatal, had now run their race: suffering all from a physical taint, which seemed to run into their moral nature, one Valois King after another had disgraced the throne. The only humane prince of the race was Louis XII. The Valois princes crushed out all constitutional life, and prepared the way for the absolutist splendours of the Bourbon rule. Their worst state was their last; the children of Catherine de' Medici, like those of Philip the Fair, dragged on a miserable and barren existence; there seemed a curse on them, a curse of barrenness, of blood-guiltiness, of vices bearing only deadly fruit: the assassin's knife closes the dreary series.

Yet, though ill-government under Henry III reached its height, though all virtues seemed turned to gall, all vices to corruption; though the people were oppressed, taxes heavier and heavier, money gotten anyhow, squandered anyhow; still Henry III, like the others of his family, had some higher tastes, overwhelmed though they were by the heavy weight of vice. He was the first sovereign who returned to Paris, and did much for the capital. He befriended learning: under him we find such scholars as Henry Stephanus (Étienne) and Joseph Scaliger; the classical tastes of the time found expression in their labours. The Platonist Ramus had perished; but Hotmann and Bodin introduced to the notice of France the field of political science and speculation; while the great Politique lawyers and writers, Cujas, Pasquier, and Du Moulin, laboured hard to advance good ideas as to law and administration. Poetry smiled on either party: each side had its 'Prince of French Poets': the Catholics claiming that proud title for Ronsard, the Huguenots for Du Bartas, whom Bacon and Milton studied, and Spenser must have known. The one great name in French literature in this age is that of Michel Montaigne, the easy-going sceptic, who, though mayor of Bordeaux, would not expose his precious person to risks of contagion, when that city was

plague-stricken, but selfishly stood aloof, watching men, and painting their moral portraiture, with the liveliness of a Reynolds, and the anatomic skill and merciless dissection of a Harvey.

Still, great men are rare in this age in France: nor did even the peaceful days to come produce any literature to be compared with that splendid outburst of genius which gilded in England the later days of Elizabeth, and shone on the incoming of King James.

CHAPTER VII.

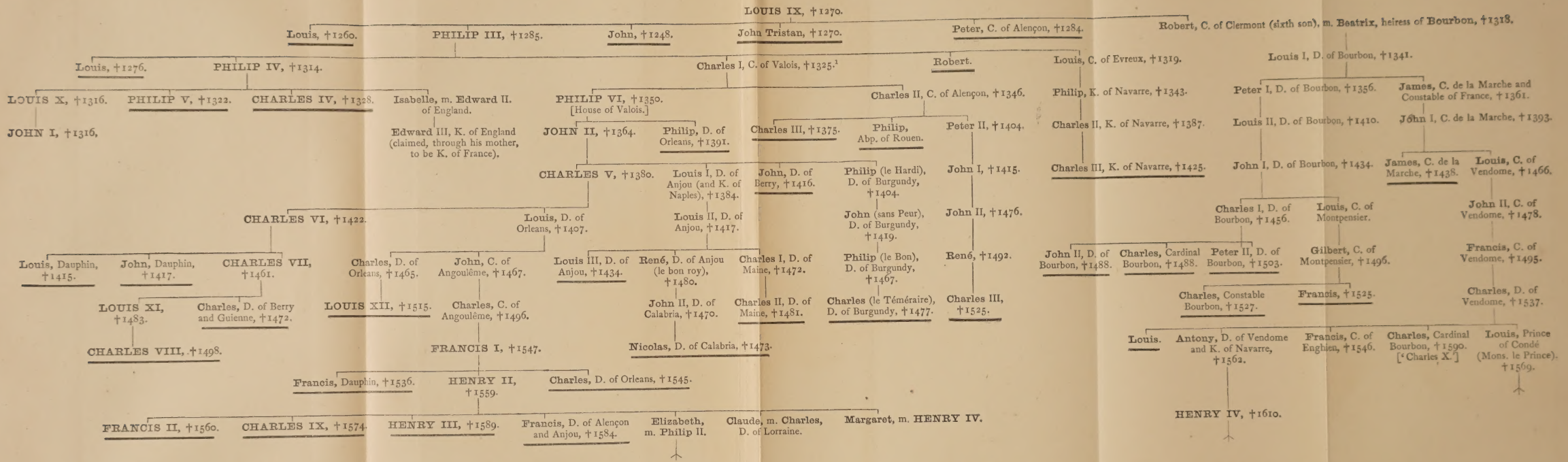
HENRY OF NAVARRE SECURES HIS THRONE.

A.D. 1589–1598.

HENRY, King of Navarre and Prince of Béarn, who on the death of Henry III became King of France by right of male succession, was many degrees removed from his kinsman the late King. Their first common ancestor in male descent was S. Louis; and in the three hundred and nineteen years that had passed since his death, more than forty different branches of the royal Houses of France, eight of whom had worn the Crown, had come to an end without leaving male issue. Henry of Navarre was of the tenth generation in descent from S. Louis, and was the eldest son of the younger branch of that younger House of Bourbon which began when Robert of Clermont, sixth son of S. Louis, married Beatrix, heiress to the lordship of Bourbon, who, by right of female succession, carried over that fief to her husband. The whole pedigree is like an ancient oak, which dies away bough after bough, until the whole stands stark and bare against the sky of time. The marks of the thunderbolt, too, can be seen on the withered tree.

It lay with the young Henry to decide whether these great titles of France and Navarre, this double Crown, should be a real or a titular sovereignty. The struggle of the coming nine years gives his answer to the question. There was no lack of competitors for the throne: Charles, Duke of Lorraine, claimed it on two grounds; first, his pedigree went back beyond the

TABLE VI.—THE DESCENT OF HENRY IV.


LOUIS IX, †1270.
Louis, †1260.
PHILIP III, †1285.
John, †1248.
John Tristan, †1270.
Peter, C. of Alençon, †1284.
Robert, C. of Clermont (sixth son), m. Beatrix, heiress of Bourbon, †1318.
Louis, †1276.
PHILIP IV, †1314.
Charles I, C. of Valois, †1325.[1]
Robert.
Louis, C. of Evreux, †1319.
Louis I, D. of Bourbon, †1341.
LOUIS X, †1316.
PHILIP V, †1322.
CHARLES IV, †1328.
Isabelle, m. Edward II. of England.
PHILIP VI, †1350. [House of Valois.]
Charles II, C. of Alençon, †1346.
Philip, K. of Navarre, †1343.
Peter I, D. of Bourbon, †1356.
James, C. de la Marche and Constable of France, †1361.
JOHN I, †1316.
Edward III, K. of England (claimed, through his mother, to be K. of France).
JOHN II, †1364.
Philip, D. of Orleans, †1391.
Charles III, †1375.
Philip, Abp. of Rouen.
Peter II, †1404.
Charles II, K. of Navarre, †1387.
Louis II, D. of Bourbon, †1410.
John I, C. de la Marche, †1393.
CHARLES V, †1380.
Louis I, D. of Anjou (and K. of Naples), †1384.
John, D. of Berry, †1416.
Philip (le Hardi), D. of Burgundy, †1404.
John I, †1415.
Charles III, K. of Navarre, †1425.
John I, D. of Bourbon, †1434.
James, C. de la Marche, †1438.
Louis, C. of Vendome, †1466.
CHARLES VI, †1422.
Louis, D. of Orleans, †1407.
Louis II, D. of Anjou, †1417.
John (sans Peur), D. of Burgundy, †1419.
John II, †1476.
Charles I, D. of Bourbon, †1456.
Louis, C. of Montpensier.
John II, C. of Vendome, †1478.
Louis, Dauphin, †1415.
John, Dauphin, †1417.
CHARLES VII, †1461.
Charles, D. of Orleans, †1465.
John, C. of Angoulême, †1467.
Louis III, D. of Anjou, †1434.
René, D. of Anjou (le bon roy), †1480.
Charles I, D. of Maine, †1472.
Philip (le Bon), D. of Burgundy, †1467.
René, †1492.
John II, D. of Bourbon, †1488.
Charles, Cardinal Bourbon, †1488.
Peter II, D. of Bourbon, †1503.
Gilbert, C. of Montpensier, †1496.
Francis, C. of Vendome, †1495.
LOUIS XI, †1483.
Charles, D. of Berry and Guienne, †1472.
LOUIS XII, †1515.
Charles, C. of Angoulême, †1496.
John II, D. of Calabria, †1470.
Charles II, D. of Maine, †1481.
Charles (le Téméraire), D. of Burgundy, †1477.
Charles III, †1525.
Charles, Constable Bourbon, †1527.
Francis, †1525.
Charles, D. of Vendome, †1537.
CHARLES VIII, †1498.
FRANCIS I, †1547.
Nicolas, D. of Calabria, †1473.
Louis.
Antony, D. of Vendome and K. of Navarre, †1562.
Francis, C. of Enghien, †1546.
Charles, Cardinal Bourbon, †1590. ['Charles X.']
Louis, Prince of Condé (Mons. le Prince). †1569.
Francis, Dauphin, †1536.
HENRY II, †1559.
Charles, D. of Orleans, †1545.
HENRY IV, †1610.
FRANCIS II, †1560.
CHARLES IX, †1574.
HENRY III, †1589.
Francis, D. of Alençon and Anjou, †1584.
Elizabeth, m. Philip II.
Claude, m. Charles, D. of Lorraine.
Margaret, m. HENRY IV.

Reckoning therefore directly from St. Louis, Henry IV is tenth in descent; while in cousinage he is so far removed, that above forty branches of the family became extinct in the male line before he became heir to the throne.

The thick line under a name signifies that that person died without surviving male issue.

[1] Of Charles I, C. of Valois, it was said that he was 'Fils de roy, frère de roy, oncle de roy, père de roy, et jamais roy.'

Opposite page 396, Vol. II.

Capet revolution of 987, and he deemed himself the heir of the Caroling Kings; secondly, he had espoused Claude of France, a daughter of Henry II, and thought it high time that the Salic Law should be set aside. Catherine de' Medici had set her heart on the fulfilment of this ambitious scheme for her daughter. Philip II, agreeing with Charles of Lorraine that the Salic Law was 'a mere pleasantry,' urged that as he himself had married Henry II's eldest daughter, his claim to the throne was clearly better than that of Charles of Lorraine. These two claimants through the female line, if the female line could succeed, were the nearest to the throne. Beside them, the younger branch of the House of Lorraine, the Guises, had also hoped to seize the Crown, basing their claim chiefly on their great popularity in Paris and with the Leaguers. The Duke of Guise, however, had perished, and Mayenne, now head of this party, was a man of less vigour and less showy qualities than his brother. He was content to carry out the policy agreed on some time back, and to proclaim the wretched old Cardinal of Bourbon as Charles X. Beside Mayenne, the Prince of Condé, head of the younger Bourbon House, and possibly some other personages, had hopes that in the coming troubles some unexpected wave might land them on the throne: still, the King of Spain, the Duke of Lorraine, and Cardinal Bourbon were the only serious competitors with whom Henry of Navarre had to cope.

Of these the Duke of Lorraine was neither a powerful prince nor a Frenchman, and may be considered as of little importance; the other two might be very formidable: the Spanish King because he wielded a great power on both the northern and southern borders of France, and had a strong party among the nobles and not a few of the higher ecclesiastics on his side; and Cardinal Bourbon, though insignificant enough in person, because the whole force of the League was at his back, and because the supporters of the old Guise policy, now led by Mayenne, were using him as a screen behind which to mature their plans.

So long as the Cardinal of Bourbon lived, the King of Spain and the Guises made common cause; though their ambitions, as

we have seen, were opposed to one another, their general aim, the restoration of strict Catholicism to the exclusion of Henry of Navarre, was completely the same; it may be said that their hatred for 'the Béarnais' kept the Spaniards and Lorrainers together. The Duke of Lorraine sent his son, with a force of about three thousand horse and foot, to Paris. Some said he had hopes of the crown for his son, as being grandson of a King of France (Henry II); but these only deceived themselves, for 'the kingdom of France falls never to the distaff'[1]. To represent the Spanish cause the Duke of Parma sent five hundred horse and some Walloon foot; some German reiters came in; the Duke of Nemours appeared from Lyons with his men; reinforcements arrived also from Cambray. With these troops the Union was strong enough to be ready for a forward movement, when the time should come.

La Noue, in a speech he made in the Council of Henry IV, 'like a great and prudent knight, as he was, summed up in a few words the position of affairs on the side of the Union. The cause is Religion; its power of command lies in the Council-General of the Union; its supports are the Pope and the King of Spain; its chiefs the Princes of Lorraine; its end and aim the assembling of the States General to elect a King[2].' He saw clearly that a junction between high Catholic principles and constitutional forms had already taken place in France; he even goes so far as to say that they were aiming at some form of sovereignty, which should combine Democracy with Aristocracy, crowning the union with a new and more limited Monarchy. The old aristocratic appeal to the States General for the better ruling of the land is here combined with the new Jesuit speculations as to the sovereignty of the people. The Bourbons were destined to defeat and crush both aspirations.

Against these formidable forces what had Henry of Navarre to depend on? The Huguenots were much weakened; though

[1] Palma Cayet, Chronologie Novennaire, Collect. Univ. lvi. p. 152.
[2] Ibid. p. 221.

their army was well-seasoned, and there was round him a fine nucleus of veterans, yet its numbers were very small; he could also command a few towns, chiefly in the South and West, while he was faintly supported by the nobles of the moderate Catholic party. For a while these seemed to be shaken, though they were far from going over to the other side. The royal army after the death of Henry III did not rally, as he had wished, round the King of Navarre, but melted away, the nobles in great numbers prudently going home to their estates. When Henry paid a solemn visit to the remains of the murdered King, as he lay in state, he was received with murmurs and gloomy looks by the priests and other Catholics watching round the bier; in audible tones they said to one another that they would never accept a heretic as their King. On the other side it must be remembered that the soldiers of the royal army were little minded to make common cause with those who had slain their master. The Council, which hitherto had ruled for Henry III, now met and discussed the future; the great gap in hereditary succession between Valois and Bourbon was urged; it was proposed to offer to Henry only the position of Commander-in-Chief, and to use him as a whip to chastise the League and the Sixteen of Paris, reserving the question of the crown to a better moment. But the feeling that they were fighting for the hereditary Kingship prevailed; they decided that, if Henry would but be converted forthwith and declare himself Catholic, their scruples would all be set at rest, and they would recognise him as King. This they accordingly at once besought him to do.

His reply was noble, and worthy of the moment. He told them he might well abandon his old faith, and become Catholic; but that he could not do it under compulsion, and as a mere matter of interest; he referred it to a Council to be held in six months' time. He did not absolutely refuse; he showed that his religious opinions might easily subordinate themselves to his political duties and interests; he showed them also that, as an honest and noble gentleman, he could not change sides

in a moment, and incur the natural and too well-founded charge of selling his faith.

The effect of this colloquy was that the chief Catholic nobles in the camp ceased to negociate with the Leaguers, though they did not as yet attach themselves closely to Henry. Épernon, the greatest among them, left the army, determined to wait and watch awhile, as also did many others. Some, however, passed over to the League-party. The Huguenots naturally remained firm; the Swiss, of whom there were many in the royal army, were delighted to serve under a Protestant warrior-chief, instead of an effeminate Catholic: the army nevertheless was much weakened, and Henry saw that the siege of Paris must at once be abandoned. As he broke up from before the walls, he felt how insecure the ground was under his feet; his partisans few and many of them dispirited, his enemies exultant, and daily growing stronger. How should he win his way to be true King of France? How unite under one sceptre so many hostile interests? How allay such chronic enmities, such family feuds, such religious bitterness? He might take the title; the reality seemed yet far away. They had proclaimed him as Henry IV in the camp; on the other hand, within Paris the Spanish Ambassador Bernardino Mendoza had already protested to the League that his master would never recognise the Béarnois as King, and after some deliberation it was agreed that Cardinal Bourbon should at once be proclaimed as Charles X. Though he was old and useless, and at this time a prisoner in the hands of the King of Navarre[1], still his proclamation (5th March, 1590) set up a new standard of civil war. The Duke of Mayenne had wished to seize the throne as nominee and Viceroy of Spain; but many of the Catholic nobles were unwilling to recognise as sovereign a man who was but one of themselves, and who had no hereditary claim to the crown; they also appealed to the States General shortly to be held. It is curious to see how a tendency to become con-

[1] Henry III, after the murder of the Guises, had shut him up in prison at Tours, where he still lay.

stitutional now marks the principles of the League; it grows in proportion as the power of Henry of Navarre grows, and as his absolutist views respecting the government of the country develop themselves. Not the Leaguers only, but the King of Spain also, thought it better that Mayenne's ambition should not be gratified. Philip thought he would be surer of his influence with a nominal and hereditary sovereign than with a strong King the real leader of his party and the choice of the people: it was all-important for him to move slowly and cautiously. France was essential in his general scheme for the restoration of Catholic uniformity in Europe; he felt also that, with Mayenne as King, the claims of the Infanta (through Elizabeth of Valois) would become worthless. Under these influences Charles X was proclaimed King by the Union, as the League was now called; and the war was to be carried on under his name, with the Duke of Mayenne as commander-in-chief, and with Spanish gold to pay the mercenary Swiss and Germans, some twenty thousand strong.

With these foreigners as the nucleus of his force Mayenne came forth from Paris, to 'drive the Béarnois into the sea, or to bring him back in chains.' Henry, when he broke up the siege of Paris, had divided his army into three parts: one he sent into Picardy, under the Duke of Longueville, the second, commanded by the Marshal d'Aumont, into Champagne, the third he himself led into Normandy; his force was small but sound; twelve hundred good horse, three thousand French infantry, all veterans, and two regiments of Swiss[1]. Thus the royalist army was now no longer in the south and west, but in the north of France; its pivot no longer Rochelle, but Dieppe or Havre. The detachments in Picardy and Champagne would encourage all friendly feeling in those districts, keep an eye on Paris, and be within call in case of need; while the main body in Normandy kept open communications with England, whence a strong force was coming, and by drawing the army of the Union after it, left the friendly

[1] Palma Cayet, Chronologie Novennaire, lvi. p. 140.

elements in the south and east unmolested. It was a complete and fortunate change of policy. The prize was now no longer some royal edict of tolerance, to be evaded or revoked at the first moment; nor was it sought by the old means of partisan warfare, a game of pawns, the capture and pillaging of single towns and castles, a brigand-war carried on without plan or master-mind: but the prize was Paris and the crown of France; and the new means the generalship of a great prince, bold and fearless in battle, cool and clear in command. With him a living interest is breathed into the age: we feel that as we hold by him we have the clue out of the maze, and that history begins again for France.

Henry's plan was to secure Dieppe and threaten Rouen; for that would be certain to tempt the Duke of Mayenne thither: he hoped by drawing him away from Paris to find himself strong enough to fight a decisive battle and to defeat the League at one blow. But Mayenne, when he came as was expected, was far stronger than had been supposed; so that Henry had to give way before him, falling back toward the sea, and sending into Picardy and Champagne for succour. Dieppe he had already secured; and, as he marched thence to threaten Rouen, had noticed, with the eye of a great captain, a splendid defensive position at Arques. Thither he now retired; and, himself working at the spade with Biron, his worthy comrade in arms, aroused such life and enthusiasm in the army that in three days a fine fortified camp sprang into being. As the lines of Arques saved the monarchy for the Bourbons, the place must be briefly described. The little river Béthune, then a broad and shallow tidal water, runs quietly towards the sea at Dieppe through a marshy valley, as it then was, of meadowland, bounded on either and by wooded sloping hills. About four miles up this valley, on the south side, stands the little town of Arques, with its fine church between the river and the rising ground, which here forms a broken slope with a spur just above the town: on this spur stands a castle, now in ruins, then in tenable condition; it commands the town, and was chosen as the

citadel of the King's lines. Entrenchments connected castle and town, and were pushed out to a hospital which stood not far from the river, forming the outermost point of the King's defences: a body of men was stationed on the river's bank, as outposts. Henry also fortified a large suburb of Dieppe, called Le Pollet, lying between that place and Arques; and occupied and strengthened a mill commanding the approach to it. Mayenne brought his army down the north side of the little river, as Henry had expected, and encamped just over against Arques. Here the King stood boldly on the defensive. First he repulsed an attack on Le Pollet, and another, at the same moment, on the entrenched camp. Mayenne found himself face to face with a new warfare, of which he and his had no idea: science, vigilance, and determination, made the little army more than a match for a force four times as large as itself. For a fortnight he tried, now the camp, now the town; one serious battle was fought; and then, hearing that Henry's friends were coming up from Picardy and Champagne, and that the English soldiers, five thousand strong, were really on the sea, he gave way and retreated into Picardy. The Lorraine Prince, weary of such war, withdrew altogether from the Union, finding to his vexation that the Guises paid scant attention to his claims and pretension; 'they preferred to begin their charity at home,' says Palma Cayet[1]. The Union in vain spread reports of victories, sent to Paris some standards taken by treachery in the battle, and did what they could to keep up the spirit of their friends by lying reports: the city soon learnt how much it might believe, when it heard that Henry, at the head of twenty thousand men in high spirit, was on his way to the capital, and that Mayenne had marched away northwards. Henry swooped on the southern fauxbourgs and carried them by assault; his men pillaged at will: it was his only way of paying them. He had no thought of a serious siege of Paris: having shown his vigour, proved his success, and pleased his army, he quietly withdrew, dividing his forces again; himself with one detach-

[1] Palma Cayet, Chronologie Novennaire, lvi. p. 172.

ment settling down at Tours. The Parliament of that city solemnly recognised him as King.

So ended the year 1589; nor was Henry dissatisfied at the results. Little as his own strength had grown,—for he was still almost without resources, and France as yet had either not pronounced for him or had pronounced against him,—yet his position was relatively much improved. Discord had broken out among his enemies, whose private aims diverged: in the field he had shown himself more than a match for his rival Mayenne, who was but ill-obeyed at Paris; one of his antagonists, the Duke of Lorraine, had withdrawn; another, the Duke of Savoy, was intent on his own schemes against Geneva and Provence, and refused to send help to the Union; and the Pope, Sixtus V, who had a great man's power of discerning greatness, declined to take any farther steps against the King, and expressed, in his own passionate way, an earnest wish for his conversion. Had Sixtus lived, he would have rejoiced with all his heart when Henry, three years later, conformed to Catholicism: he would have welcomed him back eagerly, as the counterpoise to the overweight of Spain. It was in vain that Philip and the Union sent embassies to beg him once more to excommunicate the Béarnois: he refused, and received the Catholic nobles of Henry's party with marked favour: the priests of Paris in their fierce anger called him 'a bad Pope and a Politique[1].' England and the United Provinces had at once recognised Henry as King. Queen Elizabeth sent him what seemed an immense sum of money, some £22,000 'more,' as he said, 'than he had ever before seen in his life'; the Netherlands had forwarded a like amount: the other Protestant powers speedily followed; the Turk was not far behind in welcoming the foe of Spain, and three Catholic states, Venice, Mantua, and Ferrara, sent him ambassadors and money.

Early in 1590 Henry took the field with good heart: he had

[1] Ranke, Päpste, vi. § 3. 'Politique et fauteur d'hérétiques,' says L'Estoile, Mémoires (Petitot, I. xlvi. p. 34).

cleared the Leaguers out of Anjou and Maine, and turned once more towards Northern France, where the strength of his enemies lay. His activity was startling; he was at home in the camp: there he was hearty comrade with every brave man: the hardships, the perils, the excitement of the war roused the better nature in him: he never shone more than in these years;—he probably was never so happy.

The Duke of Mayenne, who, at the end of 1589, had won back the castle at Vincennes, 'taking thus a thorn out of the foot of Paris[1],' on his side proposed to free the Seine and Oise, and to restore free communications to the capital: he therefore moved down to Pontoise, and having taken it, went on to Meulan, where good resistance was made, which stayed his hand. Though the cold was severe Henry had set out from his winter quarters; as he had cleared Anjou and Maine, he now proposed to reduce the hostile towns in Normandy; and while Mayenne was delayed before Meulan, he took first Alençon, then Falaise, Verneuil, and Lisieux, after which he mastered Honfleur, which might be very useful to him as commanding the Seine-mouth. Thence with all his force he marched up the river to relieve Meulan; and Mayenne gave way at once, and retreated into the Vexin. In spite of all the Duke's efforts, Henry assaulted Poissy and took it, thus neutralising the loss of Pontoise, and getting hold of a suitable place at which to cross to the right bank of the Seine above the Oise. The Marquis of Alègre also took Rouen, and all Normandy, save Havre, and a few unimportant places, was now in the 'royal obedience.' But behind the King's back was the town of Dreux, warmly attached to the Union, and a constant danger to him; to it he now laid siege, hoping either to take it speedily, or to draw the Duke of Mayenne to a battle. The Duke was nothing loth; he had just received from the Netherlands a great reinforcement, of cavalry chiefly, under command of Count Egmont, the first army sent openly in the name of the King of Spain into France during these

[1] Palma Cayet, Chronologie Novennaire, lvi. p. 283.

troubles; and with this force Mayenne thought himself strong enough to crush his antagonists. Henry came out to meet him; the two armies soon were face to face in the plain of Ivry, half-way between Mantes and Dreux, and a battle, which both desired, was imminent.

In the night between the 12th and 13th of March, Henry worked hard at the plan of battle: his fighting was not of the hap-hazard type so long prevalent in France; he showed his arrangements to the Duke of Montpensier, Marshals Biron and Aumont, and entrusted them to the other Biron, Camp-Marshal, that he might carry out the details. A strong religious enthusiasm awoke in his army; in a grave and earnest speech the King solemnly placed the issue in the hands of the Almighty: the Catholics in the army crowded to the neighbouring churches and heard Mass; the Huguenots, 'who were but few compared with the Catholics, also made their prayers after their sort[1].' In the morning the army all moved forward, in good heart and courage, and took up position on the southern edge of the great plain, in a regular line, with first Aumont and then Montpensier on the left wing, having landsknechts and Swiss mingled among their French soldiers. A little in front of them stood light cavalry, flanked by artillery; then came the Baron Biron, rather in front of Montpensier; in the centre was the King, with five lines of good cavalry;—the strength of the army, as of old on that side, still lying in its horse:—he was also surrounded by Swiss regiments to right and left; these were flanked again by French cavalry. To his right lay first the Marshal Biron, and beyond him the German Reiters, with French infantry to support them. Just as all was in order, the Prince of Conty and Du Plessis Mornay brought in, soon after midday, a welcome body of horse and foot; with these the King strengthened his centre. Judging that Mayenne was at Ivry, which was somewhat to his right, he pushed out light horse to feel the ground, and soon learnt that the enemy had already crossed the Eure, and was in fighting

[1] Palma Cayet, Collect. Univ. lvi. p. 306.

order, advancing to join battle. The armies skirmished during the afternoon, and bivouacked on the field that night. Their numbers were very unequal: Mayenne's force was reckoned at four thousand horse and twenty thousand foot; the King's at three thousand horse and eight thousand infantry; but the balance was redressed by the better discipline of the royal troops, and, above all, by the skill and valour of Henry, whose white plume showed, as he said, to every man 'the road to victory and honour[1].'

At first it seemed as though the troops of the Union would not fight; but when Henry had a little galled them by his artillery, their cavalry began to move: Egmont, who was hot and eager for the fray, charged up to the cannons' mouth, and the battle began. Egmont was killed, and the attack repulsed on the wings; Aumont drove the light horse of the Union before him, while Biron and Montpensier threw the Walloons into disorder: next, Mayenne with the centre, which he had made as strong as he could, fell on the King, and well-nigh overwhelmed him; the royalist nobles began to waver, the odds seemed too great. And now the King, seeing that the crisis of the day was come, and knowing that defeat was worse than death, called to them to follow, and in a moment the white plume was seen in the midst of the enemy. His nobles would not be left behind; they charged with heedless gallantry upon the foe; it was like the forward ride of the Black Prince at Poitiers; the 'iron point' penetrated deep into the heart of Mayenne's army; his onward movement was checked, his troops stood still, wavered, then fled: the battle was won. The centre thus broken, Henry at once, with a mere handful of horsemen[2], charged the Walloons and Swiss, who gave way, leaving their ensigns on the field: it was a great rout. The Germans and Walloons offered to surrender; Henry, remembering their treachery at Arques, refused, and gave orders to slay the strangers and to save the French; in which

[1] Les Histoires de Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné, iii. p. 231 (ed. 1620).
[2] He had but thirty horse with him when he came out of the mêlée.

words lay the true strength of the King's position:—his it should be to play the patriot King, and rid France of foreign dominance and interference. Exception, however, was made for the Swiss; the King, 'remembering the ancient friendship and alliance between that nation and the Crown of France[1],' granted them their lives, and received them into his service. The battle had been short, and won by the cavalry, the infantry having scarcely come into action at all[2]. The rout and slaughter were great: the Union troops were caught in Ivry, where Mayenne had broken the bridge over the Eure, and were slain like sheep: four pieces of artillery and all their baggage fell into the victors' hands. The King followed up his success vigorously: Mayenne fell back in great disorder to S. Denis: in vain did he spread the lying report that the King was killed[3], that the battle had been a drawn fight: Paris was in consternation. To crown the success there came in good news from the Low Countries: young Prince Maurice had won the important town of Breda by stratagem, and was pressing the Spaniards hard; he seemed likely to hinder any further help from being sent by Parma to the Union. Vernon and Mantes yielded at once, so closing the communications of Paris from the lower Seine: Corbeil was taken, and closed on the upper Seine the southern way to the heart of France; Lagny fell, dominating the Marne, Creil made the Oise secure. In April Henry had seized the bridge at Charenton, and had his batteries on Montmartre. Mayenne wisely refused to shut himself up in the capital; he left the Duke of Nemours in command there, and formed an army of observation to watch the King, and to await fresh help from the Netherlands. In Paris herself the richer citizens were minded to come to terms with Henry; the middle classes and the poor were still fiercely Catholic. Henry had felt a great change in public opinion since the battle of Ivry; men no longer looked

[1] Palma Cayet, Chronologie Novennaire, Collect. Univ. lvi. p. 322.
[2] See a letter by Marshal Biron in Cimber et Danjou, 1st Series, xiii. p. 185.
[3] Satire Menippée, i. p. 22 (ed. 1752).

on him as an adventurer-captain, but as a great and victorious Prince fighting for his own; this led him to hope that Paris would come over without a siege, and made him unwilling to bombard and ruin the capital: the Church party, however, was still too strong; every pulpit re-echoed with cries of 'no surrender'; a great regiment of priests and monks, thirteen hundred strong, was formed, who marched to the ramparts in their clerical dress, with musquet and pike on shoulder: the Bishop of Senlis was their colonel[1]. Their only feat of note was the exploit of an ecclesiastic, who at their review before the Papal Legate, wishing to show his loyalty to the Church, pointed his gun straight at the Legate's carriage and fired impetuously; the weapon happened to be loaded, and killed the Almoner, who sat by the Legate's side; the Legate drove away more quickly than he came, and the common folk cried out that the Almoner was 'a blessed man, being killed in so good a cause[2].'

The temper of the town was very Spanish: it was prepared to do or endure anything rather than yield; it was even willing to proclaim Philip 'Protector of France.' And much the capital had to suffer: Henry, who had occupied all the approaches to Paris[3], kept up a very strict and effectual blockade; the clergy, who (especially the Jesuits[4]) had laid in good stores of provision, were compelled to feed the citizens for a fortnight; after that the misery became extreme[5], and, as L'Estoile says, the only things cheap in Paris were sermons, for the League clergy never ceased preaching. Among other horrors of famine was what the Parisians called 'Madame de Montpensier's bread'[6] (so called because she was delighted at the suggestion, though she

[1] The word Colonel came first into use in France about this time.

[2] L'Estoile (Petitot, I. xlvi. p. 52).

[3] Among other points, he took S. Denis, key to the northern approaches to Paris by the river. There he was shown over the great abbey and the royal tombs; and seeing the effigy of Catherine de' Medici, and remembering what she had been to him, he could not resist a smile, and said, 'O qu'elle est bien là!' L'Estoile, ibid. pp. 61, 62.

[4] See how ill the Jesuits came out of it in L'Estoile's Memoirs, ibid. p. 57.

[5] See 'Les Misères de Paris' in Cimber et Danjou, I. xiii. p. 271.

[6] L'Estoile, Mémoires (Petitot, I. xlvi. p. 79).

did not try it herself),—bread, that is, made of human bones from the cemetery of the Innocents, ground up and baked like flour: men ate what they could get, asses, horses, dogs, rats, cats, even little balls of clay and slate, which they mixed with water and swallowed[1]. Henry, to the great honour of his humanity, allowed six thousand starving wretches to pass through his lines and to go elsewhere: it was against all his interests, but the King's pity was too strong for his colder judgment. All through the weary summer months the blockade lasted; but help was coming. The King of Spain sent peremptory orders to the Duke of Parma to suspend operations in the Low Countries, and to march to the relief of Paris: affairs were becoming desperate, if his long-cherished plan for the reduction of the revolted provinces must be given up: yet if Henry took Paris, he would secure himself on the throne, and once safely there, his help would also secure the Netherlands. Paris was therefore the critical point; thither Parma must go. Reluctantly he obeyed, and in August crossed the frontier, forming a junction with Mayenne; the two generals directed their steps towards Meaux, to force the royal lines. On the morning of August 30 the starved Parisians, looking forth from their ramparts, saw that the King was gone: he had decamped in the night, and was on his way to offer battle to the approaching foe. It was just at this moment that Henry wrote a touching letter to Gabrielle d'Estrées, 'Tis the eve of a battle: the issue is in God's hands, who has decreed what is to be, and what he knows to be for his glory and the saving of my people. If I lose it, thou wilt never see me more; for I am not one to fly or to retreat: if I perish, be assured my last thought but one shall be given to thee, my last to God[2].' The battle did not take place, for Parma too was a great general, and allowed no such cast of the uncertain die; he knew that he could win without fighting: as a strategist he was better than Henry, and had his army splendidly in hand:

[1] L'Estoile, Mémoires (Petitot, I. xlvi. pp. 68, 69).

[2] Lettres de Henri IV, 3 Aug. 1590 (ed. Xivrey, iii. p. 244), and L'Estoile, ibid. p. 85.

for the royal host was full of restless feudal nobles of the old type, fiery and pugnacious, while Parma's was made up of paid soldiers, who knew nothing but their commander's will. With these men he out-manœuvred the King, and took Lagny. Paris was relieved after terrible sufferings, in which it is said that a hundred thousand perished of hunger; mothers, it was whispered even devouring their offspring[1]; a countless string of wagons brought provisions in by every road. Parma also took Corbeil, and set the whole neighbourhood of the capital free. Henry could not bear to wait; for him delay was defeat. Before the end of the year many of the royalist nobles, feudal lords to the end, found that their private affairs called them home: Henry could only garrison the towns he held, and keep together a small nucleus of seasoned old soldiers, the kernel of his force. So ended the campaign of 1590 in failure: the King was not strong enough to face so great a force as Parma brought up, handled as Parma could handle it: he did not fear odds alone; against odds and generalship together he could not make head. Still, the results of the campaign, so far as his reputation went, were satisfactory enough: men recognised him as a hero, as a great general, as a cheerful friendly man, whose good sayings passed from mouth to mouth, as a humane and merciful prince, as a patriotic Frenchman. Throughout France arose the general prayer—would that he were Catholic!

The Duke of Parma hastened back to the Low Countries as soon as he could; things were going ill there, for the young Prince Maurice of Nassau, who was now beginning his great career, was far more than a match for the lieutenants he had left behind. Henry watched the great Farnese out of France, having called together his soldiers, after two months' rest: at the same time the Baron of Givry recovered Corbeil and Lagny for him. Parma recrossed the frontier with the proud satisfaction of having defeated the King without drawing the sword: he left with Mayenne a considerable force of Italians, Germans, and Spaniards.

[1] L'Estoile, ibid. p. 67.

During the siege Cardinal Bourbon, the so-called Charles X, had died: what steps should the Union now take? Some time before (in 1589) Mendoza had proposed to make Philip 'Protector of France'; he assured the Leaguers that his master 'now old and ancient, was quite satisfied with the kingdoms, duchies, and counties he already possessed, and had no need to add the realm of France[1]': still, under this modest arrogance, which professed to care so little for so great a gift, lay conditions which would have subjected France completely to the crown of Spain; conditions which even the Sixteen could not accept. Now, however, their straw-king having died, the matter came up again. Paris, galled by the miseries of her siege, and grateful to the King of Spain for his effectual help, had become thoroughly Spanish for the moment: there were also Spanish sympathisers in every province: the larger cities throughout France were strongly Catholic and inclined to support the Spanish policy: the opinion that the Estates had the right to elect a king grew stronger. It was argued that heretic Henry, so distant a cousin, had no standing-ground; that the throne was absolutely vacant, that there was no heir to it. The difficulty was how to find a fitting prince to fill the place, one who should be a stout Catholic, and yet not absolutely under Spanish domination. The idea of preserving the unity and of never narrowing the boundaries of France was weakened; each neighbouring prince stretched out his hand for something. Dismemberment and subjection to the universal monarchy of Spain seemed imminent. Philip offered to accept the title of Protector, provided that the Salic Law should be suspended, and his daughter Elizabeth, granddaughter of Henry II, proclaimed Queen, and married to whomsoever he himself might select: he also claimed for her, on ground of hereditary right (the fief being female), the Duchy of Brittany, as an independent princedom. The Duke of Mercœur, on shadowy claims of his wife[2], also dreamt of becoming Duke of Brittany. The Duke of

[1] Palma Cayet, Chronologie Novennaire, Collect. Univ. lvi. p. 212.

[2] Marie of Luxemburg, of the house of Penthièvre, a branch of the ducal

Savoy laid hands on what he could, overran Provence, entered Aix with every mark of lordship, visited Marseilles, and claimed indefinitely all that had been formerly fief of the Empire on the left bank of the Rhone. The Duke of Lorraine had views in the direction of the three Bishoprics. Such claims and such proposals could not but rouse opposition: the Catholic reaction was destined now to meet with forces more powerful than itself: for the spirit of patriotism, the desire for a strong monarchy, the determination that France should not be torn asunder, nor bow to a foreign lord, grew daily more distinct: it was felt that the Estates of the Realm, for which the power of election was claimed [1], were a danger to the unity of the kingdom; and that their rise to power would be, not the expression of a sound constitutional life, but the triumph of the great nobles and restoration of the old feudal independence, under cloak of an assembly pretending to represent the judgment of the nation. Hence it followed that the victory of Henry IV was destined to be the triumph of moderation, of the principle of hereditary succession, and of monarchy, while it also incidentally carried with it the overthrow of all ideas connected with the constitutional liberties of France, and led up directly towards that royal absolutism which marks the two centuries of Bourbon rule.

It is worthy of notice that one of the Catholic manifestos of this period is impregnated with republican ideas, mixed with echoes of an older feudalism. Applying afresh the well-known words of Charles the Bold, it says, that were France to abandon the faith, the author would be glad to see 'not six kings, but ten thousand': 'I should wish,' he adds, 'each village to have its kinglet [2].'

From another point of view the King was also head of the

family of Brittany. Penthièvre was made an appanage for Eudes (Odo), second son of Geoffrey Duke of Brittany, in 1034.

[1] See the Dialogue de Maheustre et Manant, in the Satire Menippée, iii. p. 562 (ed. 1752).

[2] Quoted by Labitte, De la Démocratie de la Ligue, p. 299.

'Politiques,' a name to which at this time a class of minds answered in England and in Germany also; it stood for those who shook themselves loose from the overwhelming influences of religious dogma, and 'looked out,' as von Ranke says, 'at the general politics and relations of Europe, and saw that the security of Henry IV on the throne of France was the guarantee for religious and political freedom throughout Europe[1].' These men were as often Catholic as Protestant: while in Germany and England they were Protestant, in France they were Catholic, and consequently if Henry IV would be true head of this party, and make it and himself one with France, he too must become a Catholic. And to this all his thoughts henceforth began to tend.

From this party in North Germany came a fine army under Christian of Anhalt; from it in England, as represented by Queen Elizabeth herself, came plentiful encouragement, friendly messages, interchange of portraits, war materials, troops, above all, money in plenty; the Queen's economy, now and before, being set aside in the presence of the great need of the French King. With these he faced the new perils of the year 1591. He had in his camp three distinct parties, each with its own aims; that of the Huguenots, brave, devoted, inclined to be exacting on the grounds of long services and sufferings, but weak in numbers and influence; secondly, the Politiques proper, the Catholic gentlefolk, who clung to the King and ardently expected his conversion; and lastly, a clique, rather than a party, composed chiefly of old courtiers of Henry III and headed by the Cardinal of Vendôme, nephew of the old Cardinal of Bourbon, who now began to bid for the Crown[2]. The grand old Pope Sixtus V had died the year before: the present Pontiff Gregory XIV was heart and soul with the Leaguers; and in the summer of 1591 he despatched an army into France, which, joining the Duke of Lorraine, who had once more begun to side with the younger branch of his house, the Guises, entered

[1] Ranke, Französische Geschichte, i. p. 387.
[2] Sismondi, Histoire des Français, xxi. p. 110 (ed. 1836).

France through Verdun. Parma was under orders to bring them help when it was needed. But nothing decisive went on in the summer and autumn of this year. Henry IV kept firm hold of the north-west as well as of the south-west of France. It was one of the happy occurrences of his life that at this time (Oct. 1591) Gregory XIV sickened and died: the papal army was paralysed and melted away; the scanty remains of it were placed under Parma's command. The dominant party in Paris also began to show signs of weakness: their preachers clamoured for blood, a reign of terror was preached, a red-Catholic régime. In November, Brisson, first President of the Parliament, who had headed the rebellion against Henry III in 1589, was seized and summarily hanged by a new committee of ten; he did not go fast enough for the League, and was suspected of being a 'politique'; confiscations followed, assassinations, proscriptions: the fanatical mob wrested all power from the respectable citizens, and called on Mayenne to reconstruct the government of the capital, and to entrust it to the most extreme section of the populace, which was completely under the influence of Spain. This was no small embarrassment to him: the war was just beginning to take a more serious form: Henry had kept the field unmolested all the year, and now in November had invested Rouen. It was a bad moment at which to throw the whole government of Paris into confusion. Mayenne therefore hastened to the capital, and with great vigour crushed the nascent revolution, hanging the most prominent and factious of the Sixteen, and restoring the chief authority to the burghers and the Parliament. It was the victory of more moderate counsels over the fanatical ferocity of the League: from this time Mayenne ceased to be the head of the resistance to Henry IV, and his place was taken by Alexander Farnese, Duke of Parma, while Paris herself, now in the hands of the wealthy and the more learned among the citizens,—of the burgher and the lawyer, instead of the populace and the priest,—began to look eagerly for peace, and to long for the conversion of the King.

Meanwhile Henry IV, at the urgent request of Queen

Elizabeth, had closely invested Rouen, which was defended by Villars[1], a man full of the ideas of feudal independence now prevalent in the League-party; he even aimed at erecting Normandy into a Lordship for himself, with Rouen as its capital. The siege went on, with great obstinacy, through the coldest time of the winter, in spite of heavy mortality on both sides; until, towards the end of January 1592, Henry learnt that Parma, his old and formidable foe, was again advancing, this time to relieve Rouen, as he had effectually succoured Paris in 1590. Leaving his trusty Marshal Biron[2] to continue the blockade, Henry took with him his cavalry only, for he had an infinite confidence in that arm, which had served him so often and so well. It was a cheerful ride of brave and spirited gentlemen, weary of the trenches and monotony of a siege, which suited them ill. The King himself was affected by their reckless bravery, and twice almost fell into Parma's hands, by riding thoughtlessly forward till he was in the midst of the enemy. The second time, near Aumâle, he escaped with great difficulty and some loss; had Parma not held his troops back, he might have caught the King and the flower of his nobility. When men reproached the Duke with his too great caution, he replied, like a true captain: 'I was not going to fall into his fault; I thought I was coping with a King, general of a great army; how could I know that he was nothing but a reckless guardsman[3]'? But while Henry tried to check the Spanish advance, Villars, seizing the favourable moment, sallied with all his garrison from the town, broke the besiegers' lines, took or spiked cannon, blew up magazines, and did not withdraw into the city till he had utterly paralysed the attack. Parma would have taken the opportunity to give battle, but here Mayenne opposed him, begging him to make sure of certain places in the rear, beyond the Somme, so as to give time for the

[1] Not the Marquis of Villars, but Villars-Brancas, of a different house, styled 'the Admiral Villars.'

[2] Biron the Marshal, and the Baron of Biron his son, were perhaps the two men who did most to set Henry on the throne.

[3] Sismondi, Histoire des Français, xxi. 150.

Catholics in the King's army to abandon him quietly. Parma, against his own judgment, yielded: Henry saw with astonishment that the relieving army thought it had done enough when it had thrown five hundred men into the town; he repaired, as far as he could, the mischief done, and began to press Rouen more closely than ever. Weariness and the camp-fever soon began to tell on the royalist gentlemen: Mayenne's judgment was justified; for the King's army melted away fast, and Parma from behind the Somme again moved swiftly forward. Henry felt himself too weak to check his advance and to continue the siege, while he was too good a soldier to be caught in his trenches like Francis I before Pavia; he therefore broke up the siege, and with all his army crossed the Seine at Pont de l'Arche. Once more Parma had outmanœuvred him: the King had neither the Duke's science nor his clearness of vision. Once more also the King's fortune more than made up for his want of science. A few days later Parma, assaulting Caudebec, was wounded slightly in the hand; he made but little of it, yet it proved fatal to his career and to him. His expedition to Caudebec had been a blunder as well as a misfortune: he found himself hemmed in by his enemies, by water and land: it required all his consummate generalship to extricate him from the false position he was in: by a brilliant passage of the Seine in face of his foes and a march through the Isle of France and Artois, he carried his army safely back to the Netherlands. His career was now ended: in spite of rest and care at Spa, whither he went to recruit, the wounded hand refused to heal: he suffered much pain with fever, and lingered on, still cherishing great schemes for the overthrow of 'him of Navarre,' though destined to lead no more armies to victory. He had come down in November 1592 to Arras to organise his great expedition against the royalists: he was determined this time not merely to raise a siege, but to carry the affair through with a strong hand: his health and spirits seemed to have returned to him. It was his last effort: on the first of December he was seized with illness; on the third he died.

Early in 1593 the Estates, or a fragment of them, met in Paris to elect a king: Spanish envoys appeared, who demanded that the Salic Law should be set aside, and the Infanta Elizabeth recognised as Queen. Mayenne met them at Soissons, and made his own bargain with them: he sold his claims, his prospects, his help, for the all but independent government of Burgundy and Normandy, with a great revenue, a heavy payment in ready money, and the settlement of his debts. This granted, he agreed to forward the wishes of the Spanish court in the Estates, and to recognise the Infanta.

As a counter-blow, Henry IV now began to negociate with the Papacy. Clement VIII, who, after the short pontificate of Innocent IX, had succeeded to the papal chair, was a man of blameless life, and unusual abilities and vigour: his views were moderate and conciliatory; he was suspicious of the power of Spain, and anxious to sustain the independence of France. Though he would not receive Henry's envoys, for fear of embroiling himself with Philip, he acted with great sagacity and caution: at first he made no change in his external policy; he maintained the fanatical envoy of his predecessors at Paris [1], and continued his subsidies to the League: he did not forget the explosion of hatred which had greeted the moderation of Sixtus V in 1590. None the less he privately let the King know his friendly feelings, and had a secret interview with Cardinal Gondi, Henry's envoy. The early part of 1593 was filled up with intrigues and negociations bearing on the subject of the throne of France. Henry felt that the time for his conversion was at hand, if it could be done so as to be accepted by the Pope, and he negociated for this purpose: discord reigned in the opposite camp, where the Sixteen of Paris disliked Mayenne, who had pursued his personal aims, and had punished their outbreak with severity; the influence and power of the more moderate section of the citizens grew daily. Conferences went on between the royalist Catholics and those of the League party: the Duke of Sully tells us

[1] Cardinal Sega, Bishop of Piacenza.

that it was about this time that the King asked him his advice touching a change of religion; and got that answer, which (if Sully's somewhat egotistical temper may be trusted) led to the King's decision: 'to advise you, Sire, to go to Mass, that you must not expect of me, a Calvinist: but I can tell you it would be the best way of sending off all these rascally plots and plans into smoke . . . to conform to the wish of the great majority of your subjects would relieve you from very many vexatious pains and obstacles in this world:—as for the next,' he added with a smile, 'I cannot answer for that': whereon the King too began to laugh[1]. The moderate Clergy were specially anxious that his conversion should take place: they declared that they would receive him into the bosom of the Church, pending the papal revocation of the excommunication: there was even talk of the sufficiency by itself of the absolution of the leader of the Gallican party, the Archbishop of Bourges, who was in the royalist camp. It seemed to the Gallican section of the French clergy a fine opportunity for the assertion of their rights and position in face of the Papacy. The Spanish party in the Estates visibly lost ground: even there the French sense of independence was outraged by the unguarded way in which Philip's envoys made known their master's ambition, and his determination to become the real overlord of France. In vain the fanatic preachers of the League hurled their worst epithets at the King's head; declaring that a relapsed heretic could not be absolved, affirming that his proposed conversion was a mere hypocrisy, forbidding their hearers to listen to it;—in spite of every effort, the King's friends grew in strength, and daily his enemies lost ground. The princes of the two Houses of Lorraine and Bourbon intrigued, meanwhile, for the hand of the Infanta: on the one side the Dukes of Guise and Nemours and the Cardinal of Lorraine dealt privately with the Spanish ambassadors; while on the other side, in the King's camp, the malcontent Bourbons, namely, the Prince of Conti, next heir

[1] Sully, Œconomies Royalles, I. p. 106 (ed. aux trois v. v.).

after the little Henry II of Condé, a deaf half-witted creature, the Cardinal Bourbon (or Vendôme, as he is called, to distinguish him from the first Cardinal Bourbon), who was 'deemed even worse than the Béarnais, and reputed an atheist,' and lastly the Count of Soissons, a more likely prince, but poor and discontented[1], also had hopes of success with the Spanish Princess. Philip however really designed this great prize, with the throne of France and the Duchy of Brittany, for the Archduke Ernest, his viceroy in the Netherlands, and for the present his envoys held back, simply playing with these proud and selfishly ambitious French nobles.

Meanwhile Henry IV was not idle: he held long and apparently earnest conferences with Bishops and theologians: the Archbishop of Bourges proclaimed that his sovereign was almost convinced, that it was a mere matter of time; and in the interval offered truce to all his foes in France. The whole country was delighted at the tidings; in the presence of the popular enthusiasm for peace, and of the news that Henry had brilliantly taken Dreux[2], that strong and important Leaguers'-town, which watched over the approaches to Normandy and Brittany, the Spanish ambassadors saw that it was time for them to play their last card: they set aside the foreign Archduke Ernest as hopeless, and announced that Philip selected the Duke of Guise as his son-in-law. But the card was played too late: though Paris, where the name of Guise was still like magic, warmly received the news, still the Parliament of Paris, the legal instincts of which were strong as ever, stoutly declared that the Salic Law must rigorously be maintained[3]. In the face of this declaration the States hesitated to elect the Infanta as Queen, and the peril passed away.

During these days Henry IV seemed daily to draw nearer to

[1] From the Report of the Ambassador of Savoy given in Capefigue, La Ligue et Henri IV, p. 225 (ed. 1843).

[2] The stages by which Henry IV advanced and grew stronger are admirably given by von Ranke, Französische Geschichte, i. pp. 407, 408.

[3] Arrêt de la cour de Parlement de Paris, 28 Juin, 1593.

conversion: his whole court was eager for it, the little band of faithful Huguenots alone excepted; even the all-powerful mistress, Gabrielle d'Estrées, whose tendencies were the other way, now urged him to take the plunge; it would secure his throne, and—who knows?—pave the way to her marriage and elevation, and the acceptance of César her son as Dauphin of France[1]. For she saw that a papal dispensation alone could set the King free from his nightmare of a wife Margaret of Valois, and that such a dispensation could not come till Henry was reconciled with the Papacy. The conferences went on: at last (23 July, 1593), after a five-hours' discourse from the Archbishop of Bourges, the King could hold out no longer; he declared himself convinced; he signed a profession of faith, and the very next Sunday, after provisional absolution by the Archbishop, 'took the great plunge,' as he calls it, and heard Mass at S. Denis. We must remember that Henry had dealt throughout not with the High Catholic clergy, with their unpatriotic and ultramontane leaning on Spain, but with the royalist national Bishops, who cherished the thought of a Gallican Church with its independent life and liberties. The Leaguers, lay and clerical, still refused to recognise him; how could they do so, when his whole position was opposed to their intolerant views? It was one of the main objects of his life to find a middle course, whereby Catholic and Huguenot might live in peace together, and his ultimate success in these endeavours forms the chief glory of his reign: for it made quiet in his borders; and more, it taught his subjects the lesson which often afterwards stood them in good stead; it taught them to remember that before all things they were Frenchmen.

Looked at dispassionately, we may condemn this act of the conversion, as religiously insincere, and as brought about by wrong motives; we must allow that politically it was a wise and successful step[2]. Henry had the rare virtue of knowing when

[1] César, Gabrielle's firstborn, was afterwards made Duke of Vendôme.

[2] On this point see De Lezeau's account in Cimber and Danjou's Archives, I. xiv. pp. 64, 65.

to act and when not. It is said that when he first took the suburbs of Paris he might easily have got into the capital; and he has been blamed, then and at other times, for slackness in pushing his advantages. If however we look at the circumstances closely, we shall see that there have usually been good reasons for caution: thus, after Coutras, a rapid forward movement would have been too late to save the Germans from defeat, and would probably have led only to a disaster; the taking of Paris would have swallowed up his little force in the heart of a city then bitterly hostile. And thus, again, in the matter of his conversion, had he changed faith in 1589, when the Catholic nobles urged him to do so, the force of faction was still so strong that it is very doubtful whether any great result would have followed: whereas now, with all France ripe for it, when patriotic men everywhere were eager to welcome him, and the selfishness of his many antagonists had been fully displayed; when even Paris wished for rest,—the conversion had an electric effect. It is almost idle to ask how far it was sincere. The King's letters show that he treated the matter almost with scorn: there is no small truth in the sayings attributed to him, 'Paris is worth a Mass,' and the like, though he may never have uttered one of them; for Henry was in this respect the Talleyrand of his day; he said so many good things that every epigrammatic saying was fathered on him. These sayings express the tone of his mind, which was one of simple indifference: without calling him a sceptic, as does Montaigne, we may well believe that he took no interest in theological questions, and that when it came to the point, and religious convictions strove with political exigencies, Henry proved himself a genuine Frenchman, and the instincts of King and statesman in him prevailed. Men said at the time that 'he held the opinion that a man may be saved in either religion[1],' a view not known in that age, and rarely held even in our own.

The act was speedily justified by its results: it took the heart out of the opposition. City after city laid its keys at his feet

[1] De Lezeau in Cimber and Danjou's Archives, I. xiv. pp. 65, 66.

with enthusiasm: Meaux came first, then Orleans and Bourges, then Lyons: by the end of the year a great part of France had declared for the King, and was at peace [1].

Early in 1594 Henry was crowned at Chartres, without waiting for the papal absolution: he did not even think it well to delay till Rheims, the coronation-city, came over to him. The Bishop of Chartres officiated, personating the 'first Peer of France [2],' the Archbishop of Rheims: in place of the six lay Peers, nominees of the King sat in state [3]; for of the six great fiefs, five had fallen in to the Crown, so that the titles were no longer held by subjects [4], while the sixth, Flanders, was now foreign, and lost to the Crown. All the six ecclesiastical peers were absent, and represented by other Bishops: only one of them, the Bishop of Châlons, had come to Chartres, and he fell ill, so that he could not be present at the ceremony. The ambassadors of two powers only were there, Venice and England; for Queen Elizabeth, though she protested against 'Burbo's changed shield,' was too shrewd to quarrel with the King, and renewed her alliance with him; while Venice hailed him as her natural ally, in her lifelong struggle with Germany and Spain.

Ere long the capital opened her gates to the brilliant King: he was received with such enthusiasm as the former Duke of Guise alone could have aroused a while before; the crowds and the excitement reached their highest point when Henry went in state to hear Mass at Notre Dame. The hottest firebrands among the League-preachers and citizens were expelled the town: they might have passports to join Mayenne, or they might submit and settle where they would, but not in Paris: Henry's whole conduct was that of a humane and moderate Prince, who wishes to conciliate and pacify, and is too strong to persecute.

[1] L'Estoile (Petitot I. xlvi. p. 372) testifies to the great longing for peace which marked this year 1593.

[2] Cimber and Danjou, I. xiii. p. 405.

[3] Ibid. p. 411.

[4] These were Burgundy, Normandy, Guyenne, the three Dukes; Flanders, Languedoc, Champagne, the three Counts.

War went on awhile on the northern frontier, where the enfeebled remnant of the League kept up communications with the Spaniards in the Low Countries. Thither Mayenne betook himself, and soon learnt from the Archduke Ernest that Spain cared only for her own interests. All through the early part of 1594 he and Count Mansfeld molested Henry, who had invested Laon, the last stronghold of the Leaguers in those parts[1]: after a long and perilous siege he took the place. With the fall of Laon all resistance ended on that side. The Spanish army withdrew, the chief places submitted.

For a time Villars held out in Normandy, but the King won even him at last, in spite of his great pretensions in the west. With him Rouen and Havre also came over. He was made Admiral of France; and as two could not hold that office at once, Biron, who held it, was removed, and made a Marshal; his discontent with the master he had served so brilliantly dates from this beginning.

All through the latter part of 1594 submissions followed one another swiftly; the towns came in so fast that it was said the Leaguers in their panic had left the keys behind them at the Louvre, and the King had picked them up. The nobles he bought over, making separate treaties with the chief ones, and following his marked policy of appointing his old adversaries to office even to the neglect of his old friends. The Houses of Lorraine and Guise were appeased with bribes of money and honours.

The reaction in Henry's favour spread irresistibly across France: even in Paris the Sorbonne, and with it the University, followed the example set them by the Parliament of Paris, which was now joined by the royalist Parliament from Tours, and professed its profound loyalty. Only the Jesuits resisted, faithful to their principles, hostile as ever to a moderate King. The attempt of Chastel, who had been in one of their seminaries, to assassinate Henry was made an excuse for proceeding to

[1] It was the last stronghold of the Carolings in the days of Hugh Capet. See Vol. i. p. 175.

extremities against them; though they were certainly not guilty of instigating the act, the would-be murderer had learnt in their schools, and had been imbued with their political opinions, which were in every way antagonistic to the monarchical absolutism and religious tolerance of Henry, and certainly did not discourage violence; they were consequently banished the realm early in 1595. The Parliament of Paris, perhaps anxious to show that it had abjured those anti-royalist views which it had expressed with emphasis but a year before, eagerly became the instrument of their expulsion.

There remained one enemy, the most formidable of all: by intrigue, by moral support to all discontent, by money, even by armies, the Spanish Crown had harassed France through all these years, interfering on every frontier, but never deigning to declare war, or in any way to recognise Henry IV as King of France. It clearly was the Spanish policy to treat the throne as vacant; to put forward now the Infanta, now some powerful Prince as a candidate, to foment all ill-will and trouble, to hinder the country from settling down in peace. So long as this went on Henry could never be safe, nor France recover her lost health. And yet there could be no end to it, except by open war, which should compel the Spanish Court to recognise Henry as Sovereign of France; and for open war the King was little prepared. He had no standing army: he had always trusted chiefly to the levies of friendly nobles, a half-feudal force, under little discipline, apt to melt away if things grew tedious or went amiss, and led by men who wanted to be paid in lands and dangerous dignities of half-independent lordships. He had no money to hire mercenaries from Switzerland or Germany; there was no solid army of foot-soldiers; he had trusted chiefly to his cavalry, with which he had done many exploits, and they were all but powerless against the infantry of Spain. Even his artillery had been neglected: in the battles of the civil war it had played but little part, and had been found an encumbrance rather than an advantage to the light and loose armies of

the adventurer King. Every one knew how formidable the Spanish footmen were, the world had not yet learnt that weakness had eaten into the very vitals of the power of Philip II: he was still the dread of Europe.

Yet unless Henry would brave the risks of war, his labours might all be lost; and after all, open war could not be much worse than the existing state of things, when, at any moment a Spanish army might pour over the frontier and raise some ill-affected province. England moreover and Holland promised help, and cheered on the King: he might also look for some support from the North German princes. So he decided on open war: it would bring intolerable evils to a crisis; he loved the stir of a campaign, and was accustomed to fight against overwhelming odds; by war he would make the quarrel a national one; and any French noble who then sided with Spain would be a traitor to him and to his country.

The King was also much urged to war by the Duke of Bouillon, who hoped to increase his power in the direction of the Netherlands: Henry's acts were ever much swayed by personal motives, and Bouillon, whom he afterwards disliked and treated with sternness, may have been as much the cause of the declaration of war as reasons of state or policy could have been.

From yet another point of view this war was of importance: Henry had promised himself to group together all the European antagonisms and jealousies against Philip: he had the Pope's countenance on the one side, and the promised support of England, Holland, the Swiss, the German Protestants on the other: the Lorrainers were also now friendly, and anxious for the war; their position being entirely changed.

War was accordingly declared against Spain in November 1595: Philip at once replied that he was not the enemy of France but her friend; that he was fighting only against the Béarnais and the Huguenots. The answer showed that there was wisdom in Henry's act: and that Philip was not, or chose not to be, aware of the changed times.

The war began in Franche-Comté: thither Philip had sent Velasco, the governor of the Milanese, who formed a junction with Mayenne, and threatened to overwhelm Biron, who had occupied Dijon. Henry came up, with cavalry only as usual, and, learning that the Spanish and League forces had crossed the Saone, fell on them at Fontaine-Française near Saint Seine. It was one of his wild and brilliant actions, 'elsewhere he had fought for victory, here for life,' and his horsemen gallantly supported him in a mad attack on a whole army, horse and foot. Velasco halted, drew back: he could not believe that the King was there with only a handful of cavalry; it seemed to him that an army must be at the back of such audacity; and instead of advancing as he should have done, he fell back across the Saone. It was only a skirmish, but it settled the fate of the campaign on the eastern frontier. Velasco ventured on nothing more; and the King established himself firmly in the County and Duchy. On the Picard frontier things went otherwise: the Duke of Bouillon and the Count of Nassau had been bidden to penetrate into Luxemburg and the Liege bishopric: Fuentes, who now commanded in the Netherlands, easily drove them out, and in his turn invaded Picardy: Ham, le Catelet, Capelle, Ardres were quickly taken, and he came down to Dourlens. Discord and ill-feeling existed between Henry's lieutenants; the Dukes of Nevers and Bouillon could not agree: Villars, generous, brave, and vain, cared only to distinguish himself. In an assault on the Spanish lines he was defeated with great loss, and slain. It was said that Bouillon had not chosen to support him in his gallant ride against the entrenchments. It was another characteristic cavalry battle: we are for ever saying, during these campaigns, that the charges of the French horse 'are magnificent but are not war': they were full of the fire, the dash, the undisciplined boastful bravery of the noblesse: no one was a more serious offender against the rules of warfare than the King himself.

Dourlens fell; Cambrai revolted and opened her gates to

Fuentes; Calais herself was menaced; the King seemed to be utterly powerless to stem the tide of Spanish success, and the ground was shaking beneath his feet, when suddenly a turn of fortune's wheel saved him. For some time past the Cardinal D'Orsat and Du Perron, Henry's ambassadors at Rome, had been skilfully urging Clement VIII to take the great step, and to absolve their master: now at last he yielded: Henry, without his countenance, would be too much the King of the Gallican Clergy: the Pope hoped to make him the faithful subject of the Papacy, and a counterpoise to the dangerous preponderance at Rome of Spain, and of the high Catholic party in Austria. So great a boon as the restoration of a relapsed heretic could not be granted lightly: long time had the Pope hesitated and delayed; now he made onerous terms with the King, the aim of which was to prove the dependence of the Gallican Church, and to molest the Huguenots. He denied the competency of the Archbishop of Bourges to give the King absolution; he demanded that Protestants should be excluded from all offices whatever, that the Mass should be re-established in Béarn, that the Tridentine decrees should be published and received, that the Jesuits should be allowed to return to France. The King took good care not to carry out those conditions which aimed at the extirpation of heresy: the rest he fulfilled.

The Absolution was a final blow to the League: the outstanding nobles speedily came in; and Henry, after his usual habit, treated with each separately. The Duke of Joyeuse, third of the name, was made a Marshal, and Governor of part of Languedoc, and Nemours also submitted; Mayenne, the old chief of the League, having shown them the way early in 1596, and having made good terms with the King. The meeting between him and Henry was very characteristic: the King was walking, hand in hand with Sully, in his park at Soissons, when Mayenne came up, and falling on one knee declared his fidelity, and thanked the King 'for having freed him from Spanish arrogance and Italian trickery.' Henry

received him warmly and kindly after his wont; then taking him by the hand he set off to show him the improvements he was making in his park. The day was sultry, and the King walked very fast: Mayenne, portly and pompous, crippled with sciatica, and short of wind, could scarcely keep up, turned red, panted and perspired, till Henry turning to Sully, whispered in his ear, 'If I drag this big body much farther with me, I shall be cheaply avenged of all the ill he has done me,' and then he asked the Duke if he went too fast for him? Mayenne confessed that he was half dead; whereon Henry stopped and clapping him on the shoulder said gaily, 'Pardy, my friend, now I have taken all the vengeance I shall ever take of you': and dismissed the Duke charmed with his cheerfulness and gaiety of heart [1].

Mercœur, who still held an independent position in Brittany, and Épernon, who was establishing a sovereignty for himself in Provence, and treated as a Prince with Philip II, alone remained unsubdued. Provence, however, declared openly for Henry and received the Duke of Guise, who was now the representative of the royal authority: city after city, district after district, submitted; until at last Marseilles alone was left. That city, fanatically devoted to the high Catholic party, and at the same time cherishing thoughts of civic independence under its Consuls, was supported by a fleet and army of Spaniards: but a revolution within the walls, to which the two Consuls fell victims, chased away the foreigners, and threw open the gates to the Duke of Guise. Épernon, seeing that all was lost, at last submitted. With the exception of Brittany France was now completely pacified, and better days began to dawn.

The northern frontier, however, was not yet secure; and Queen Elizabeth now offered to garrison Calais and to save it from the Spaniard. Henry however in his lively way said 'He would rather be bitten by a lion than a lioness, if he must be bitten at all,' and would not hear of it: whence came a

[1] Sully, Œconomies Royalles, I. pp. 327, 328 (ed. aux trois v. v.).

coolness between the two great princes. Henry sat down before La Fère, with such little force as he had, to an arduous siege which ended in the capture of the place; the Archduke Albert, now governor of the Low Countries, slipped past him there, and by a sudden attack, took Calais, that great gateway into France: he mastered, in spite of Henry's efforts, Guines also and Ardres, and having secured them all went back in triumph to the Netherlands. From this moment the war languished, and both parties seemed equally worn out. Henry was anxious for peace, though the English and Dutch resisted: they drew more closely together in their common interest of resistance to Spain. Yet the King's successes had done nothing to lessen the burdens of France; the country was still overwhelmed by taxation, and distressed beyond measure; discontent lurked in every corner. Above all, the Huguenot nobles had no small ground for grumbling. Henry had neglected and depressed these faithful followers of his stormy fortunes: they had been set aside, while Catholics, who had fought against the King till yesterday, were flattered and caressed and promoted to posts of honour and trust. The nobles who had submitted were also eager to get more from the King's distress. It was at this moment that they put forward the Duke of Montpensier as their spokesman. The King, after the loss of Calais, had withdrawn to S. Quentin to watch the Spaniards thence, and to secure that all-important city from their clutches. There it was proposed to him, as the only way by which to resist his foes, that he should grant the lordship of their governments to the different governors of provinces, with hereditary rights, and the sole obligation of liege homage: these governors would then charge themselves with the defence of the frontiers, and would raise their own armies; they knew well how hard it was for the King to keep any army on foot. It is needless to say that Henry, who treated Montpensier very generously, would have suffered anything rather than permit France to fall back into such a feudal anarchy: all his autocratic instincts, all his clear sight of what was the destiny of his

country, made it impossible for him to surrender, even in this hour of weakness, such elements of power.

Still, the times were very disheartening for the King: the Assembly of Notables called by him at Rouen, ten ecclesiastics, eighteen nobles, and fifty civic magistrates, did but add to the confusion of the realm: Henry, at the advice of Maximilian of Bethune, Marquis of Rosny, afterwards so well known as the Duke of Sully, allowed the Notables to establish a 'Conseil de Raison[1]' 'for the finances, and to divide the revenue of the state into two equal parts, one for the King and for war, the other for the public services.' This council proved quite unable to grapple with the great evil of the time, the confusion and exhaustion of finance: Sully[2] refused them his help; and in three months' time they were glad to be released from the hopeless task: the King had succeeded, as he was glad to do, in discrediting the body which in a sense represented his people; and Sully became his Minister of Finance. The King grew ever more and more unpopular, and seemed to have given up all hope or wish to extricate himself; he went to Paris, and as it was winter, amused himself with fêtes and idle days and nights, seeming quite to abandon the unequal strife.

He was awakened from his careless dreams by a thunderclap. We may let Sully tell it in his own words. In March 1597, there had been a superb fête at Court given by the Constable Montmorency; the King was there; it was the finest entertainment of the winter. Sully had gone away about two in the morning, and had been abed some while when a messenger entered his chamber with a scared countenance, and said the King had sent for him at once. 'I dressed as quickly as I could, and ran to the Louvre. I found the King in his chamber, half undressed, striding up and down, his hands clasped behind his back, his head down, and care and vexation

[1] The 'livre de raison,' 'libro dei ragioni,' was the great account-book of the State.

[2] He at this time calls himself Rosny, not being yet created Duke of Sully.

written on every feature. The courtiers stood round, on this hand and that, leaning against the walls, in dead silence. The King advanced to me, took me warmly by the hand and said, "Ah! my friend, what a mishap! Amiens is taken." I confess that I, like all the rest, was struck dumb by such an unexpected blow. A fortress so strong, so well found, so close to Paris, the only key of the kingdom from the side of Picardy, taken in a moment, without a note of warning[1]'! Sully, however, gathered courage, and cheered the King by assuring him that he had in hand a plan which would soon enable him to recover not merely Amiens, but many other strongholds: from that moment King and minister had but one thought, how they might wipe away this disgrace. Fêtes and pleasures came to an end at once: there was no money, no army; but the King's restored energy and Sully's sagacity speedily arrested the evil, which threatened the capital itself, where there were many who sympathised with the Spaniard. Henry tore himself from Gabrielle, and posted his little army, some five thousand men, to watch the enemy; while the minister with feverish activity gathered money and troops. None seconded him better than the Leaguers of old. Mayenne hastened with a strong force; Paris formed a regiment, Rouen did the like: the offended Huguenots showed no such alacrity, but haggled over the price of their help. We see in them the beginnings of that stiff aristocratic resistance, which afterwards was forced to bow before the iron will of Richelieu.

In one way or other an army was got together, and the siege of Amiens vigorously carried on. Sully from Paris sent regular supplies, and kept the army together by an unwonted punctuality of payments: he thought for and organised everything: he even established a field-hospital for the sick. The Spaniards attempted to relieve the place: though the Cardinal-Archduke Albert (of whom the King said that he came as a soldier and went back like a priest) brought up a fine army to the neighbourhood, the King's fame daunted them, and they achieved nothing,

[1] Sully, Œconomies Royalles, I. p. 349.

though the opportunity was good. The siege was then near the end: the garrison had done its utmost, and was daily more and more closely pressed: in the end of September it surrendered. With the fall of Amiens fell all the Kinglets who had been raising their heads throughout France[1].

As the siege of La Fère had been the whole campaign of 1596, so that of Amiens was the campaign of 1597. The war was in reality at an end. Both Spain and France were heartily weary of the struggle; the Pope's mediation was gratefully accepted, and negotiations began at Vervins between the envoys of France, Spain, and Savoy. England and Holland still stood out: the Duke of Mercœur in Brittany had the audacity to wish to send his ambassador, as an independent power: to this Henry would not listen for a moment. The English under Sir John Norris had reduced many of the strongholds of that wild district, and had driven out the Spanish garrisons: Mercœur, seeing how things went with Spain, thought it wisest to make his own peace with the King: he gave his only daughter to César, Duke of Vendôme, Henry's natural son, and accepted a large sum of money: and so the last disturbed district had peace.

Three things at once occupied the King's attention during the spring of 1598;—the miserable state of the finances, the discontent of the Huguenots, and the terms of peace. The first could not be remedied all at once: it formed the chief burden on Sully's shoulders. The second was urgent: for the Protestants were 'angry and malign,' even to threats of arms: Henry disliked their independent spirit; he distrusted the Duke of Bouillon, the Count of Auvergne[2], Marshal Biron, his most devoted officers, and promoted over their heads such persons as Villeroy, an old Leaguer, who had dealt with Spain, but had at last come over to the King. Such men he appeared to like better than the old unchanging nobles, who seemed ever to reproach him for his weaknesses: and the Huguenots,

[1] 'Tant d'autres petits roitelets desquels les royautez expirèrent avec la reprise d'Amiens.' L'Estoile (Petitot, I. xlvii. p. 216).

[2] Charles of Angoulême, natural son of Charles IX.

conscious that they deserved more generous treatment, began to ask if they were any better off than under Henry III, and if those ominous stipulations attached to the Papal absolution were to be carried into effect. Henry felt that a great effort must be made to allay their anger; civil war seemed to be drawing near again. Accordingly in the month of April, 1598, he signed the famous Edict of Nantes[1]. Hitherto the Huguenots had been treated to agreements which were mere truces, ever evaded, and leading to fresh outbreaks: this Edict was made in good faith, and gave them at last, though it was not immediately put in operation, a definite and sufficient standing-ground. It allowed them rights of worship (except in some old League-towns, where separate treaties had forbidden it, places like Rheims, Soissons, Dijon, Sens); it gave them rights of holding office in the judicature and finance; it established a Protestant chamber in the Parliament of Paris, and joint-chambers in other local Parliaments. The Huguenots won by it a kind of independence: and had there been a spark of constitutional life in France, the Edict would have had great influence in fanning and developing it. On the contrary, in the political result it only in the end strengthened the selfish aristocratic resistance to the monarchy, while in its social result it fostered a prudent, thrifty, hardworking, and ingenious people, whose influence on the prosperity of France was never fully known till it was destroyed[2].

The Edict was not received without some trouble; some flames of the old fire shot up again in Paris, where the fanatical spirit yet lived, though marvellously quieted; the Parliament was greatly moved; processions began again, an

[1] Dumont, Corps Diplomatique, v. p. 545.

[2] At this time (Ranke, Französische Geschichte, ii. p. 43) there were not more than about 750 Huguenot Churches in France; of these over 200 were in Upper and Lower Burgundy, in Poitou and Saintonge over 100, in Provence and Dauphiny 94, in Guienne 83. In the north of France, where the Reformed tenets had ever been weak, the congregations were very scattered: in Normandy there were 59; the Isle of France, Picardy, and Champagne made but a single province. 'It is said,' von Ranke adds, 'that there were now 274,000 Protestant families in France, but I should not like to vouch for these figures.'

evil omen; the voice of the hot preachers was heard once more; three men were arrested for plots against the King's person. Henry, who was equal to any emergency when once roused from his idleness, met the Parliament sensibly and firmly, and the opposition gave way. The Edict was registered and became law.

Twenty days later the Treaty of Vervins[1] was signed (2 May, 1598). It was the simplest of Treaties; the difficult point respecting Saluzzo was slurred over, though only to produce a fresh trouble. The gist of it lies in a single article, which stipulated that Spain should restore all places belonging to France which might then be in her hands.

It was nominally a return to the position of affairs in 1559, at the Peace of Cateau-Cambresis; but how utterly changed was the state of things: then Spain was at the top of her repute and strength, and the Catholic reaction was in its most impetuous rush; now her strength was gone, and the force of the movement spent: then there were no United Provinces, sapping the fighting power and wealth of Spain, and Germany, that unruly land of Princes, was quiet; now the new combinations of European politics were beginning to show themselves, and the supremacy of Spain by sea was giving way, and on land was rudely shaken: then France was just beginning her thirty years of feeble Valois boy-Kings; now she was in the hands of a man of genius, whose energy when roused was terrible to the falling monarchy of Spain: and last of all, that dark monarch who for all the intermediate time had ruled the destinies of Spain, and had strained every nerve to mould Europe to his will, was now an old man, worn out, and conscious that his end was near.

It has been said of this Peace of Vervins, as was said a hundred years before by Commines of the English wars, that France, beaten by the sword, was victorious with the pen: in truth, however, there was not much ground for the saying. For Spain was as much exhausted as she: the English cruisers vexed the Spanish Main, shook her supremacy, and cut off her supplies of gold; while in the north Prince Maurice baffled all

[1] Dumont, Corps Diplomatique, v. p. 561.

the efforts of the best Spanish generals and troops, which were thus kept from overwhelming France; and at home Spain was fearfully exhausted. Peace was as needful for the one as for the other: Philip might be superior in war to any one of his adversaries: against all together he was overmatched, and it was salvation to him to detach one power from the alliance: so doing he would save the Spanish Netherlands, hard pressed between France and the United Provinces; he would sow distrust between the friends, remove their one Catholic power, and gratify the Papacy, if he really cared for that. It is true that Henry broke faith with Queen Elizabeth by this peace: the bait was too tempting for him, and he felt that the salvation of France came before all things.

So the Peace was made; and in it the aged sixteenth century seems to sink to rest. It closed the wounds of all that strife of three generations, which began with the Reformation as a group of purely religious wars, and, after dreary epochs of civil contest, came to an end in which nothing was said as to matters of faith, an end heralded by the great Edict of Toleration.

Philip II did little after signing the Treaty of Vervins. He had left his mark on the age, deep and sometimes scathing; as he lingered through the few months which lay between the treaty and his death (13th Sept., 1598) he must have seen that his main principle had given way, that his great ambition was unfulfilled. The United Provinces, defiant, independent, Protestant; France,—with no Queen Mother to reverse the act,—granting an honest protection to her Huguenots; and England settling more and more into her modern form; these were the end of all his struggles; this the outcome of his high Catholic policy. And as he cast his eyes around at home, what comfort could he find? He could but wrap himself in silent Spanish pride and die.

BOOK IV.

THE BOURBON MONARCHY: ITS RISE.

A.D. 1598–1660.

INTRODUCTION.

THE age of the true Bourbon monarchs covers exactly two centuries; and of these the first is the hundred years of their rise to the supreme height of splendour and power, and the second the hundred years of their gradual fall. Henry IV came to a disputed and half-ruined throne in the year 1589; a century later, in 1688, 1689, William of Orange, by uniting the two sea powers in a bond of hostility to France, marked the turn in the tide, the point at which the predominance of Louis XIV begins to give way; in 1789 came the Revolution, overthrowing and clearing away the ancient fabric of the Monarchy. Five kings reigned over France during this period; two were cut off before their time; two were great men. Three ministers rise pre-eminent even above the great kings themselves; in Sully, Richelieu, and Colbert we see the highest administrative powers dedicated to the increase of the royal authority, and to its consolidation in France. Sully brought order out of chaos; Richelieu crushed the last remains of resistance at home, and raised high the credit of France abroad; Colbert, in spite of economic errors, developed the wealth of the country, and enabled Louis XIV to shine as the most splendid of monarchs. These three ministers all belong to the century of rising power; the ministers of the later century are of a very different order.

Not one of these, monarch or minister, except perhaps Colbert in a faint degree, has won for himself the high praise of being a man really careful of the well-being of his people for their own sake; on the contrary they are all careless of, and even contemptuous towards, the nation whose destinies they guide. This, the highest glory of princes and rulers, has rarely been even the ambition of French kings or ministers; for lack of this France has missed a healthy constitutional life; she has seen party spirit drop down into a political rancour which has made the clash of opinion fatal, and the victory of one party the death of the other; and she has oscillated heavily, till by-standers held their breath, between extreme points of political passion; now absolutist, now fiercely republican; now ruled entirely by privilege, now sweeping away all class distinctions whatever; now bowing the knee before an Ultramontane priesthood, now defying Heaven in the temple of Reason; now an Empire of the sword, now a Monarchy of the shopkeeper; in all phases showing a certain generosity of temper as well as a love for a logical theory of political life, and for strict evolutions from axioms and principles; often she has brought her well-wishers to the brink of despair by her strange inability to see the force of practical considerations, or to tolerate the very existence of differences of opinion.

The reign of Henry IV, which really begins from the close of the open struggle with Spain in 1598, is the first period of the history of modern France. Now ends the older rivalry of France and the Austro-Spanish House, the rivalry of Francis I and Charles V handed down to the third generation[1]; now ends the open quarrel of the two faiths, and with it those intestine troubles which had made the century hideous. With Henry begins the centralised monarchy, based on a remarkable double policy, twice double; first, the apparently contradictory repression of Protestantism at home, and encouragement of it

[1] 'Les rois de France et d'Espagne sont comme posés dans les deux bassins d'un balance, desquels il est impossible que l'un hausse que l'autre n'abaisse.' Sully, Œconomies Royalles (viii. p. 63, Ed. Écluse).

abroad[1]; and then, secondly, crossing the first contradiction fitfully and uncertainly, come two opposite lines of policy, the one, that of making France the head of the Latin family in Europe in its secular antagonism with the northern and Germanic peoples, by means of a union between France and Spain; the other, that of becoming the central power between the Latin and the Germanic races, and thereby obtaining overwhelming influence in the councils of all Europe. To tempt her towards the former of these lines, she had her ethnological affinities and the decidedly Catholic temper of her people, as well as the fact that she is perhaps more naturally inclined towards a Mediterranean than an open-sea policy; towards the second course she was drawn by the unrivalled advantages of her geographical position, touching, as she does, on outer and inner seas, bordering on Spain and Italy, on Germany and the Netherlands, while the tendencies of her mind lead her to subordinate her Catholicism to her general interests, to take up a middle position, and to profess a toleration which springs from indifference rather than from principle. It may possibly be true that the origin of these diverse and almost contradictory tendencies is to be traced back to the earliest history of France; and that the unwavering Catholicism of the Celtic populace is the foundation of the Spanish-Catholic policy, while the less theological temper of the ruling classes, perhaps still not untouched by the influences of their Frankish-Germanic origin, gave to the other line, the line of alliance with German Protestantism combined with a Catholic system at home, the eventual victory. Be this as it may, between these very different lines of policy and ambition France has fluctuated ever since the sixteenth century; and in the reign of Henry IV their coexistence is the cause of much of the apparent confusion, entanglement, and even contradiction in which the reign is involved.

[1] Of which the reigns of Francis I and Henry II had already given examples.

CHAPTER I.

HENRY IV; HIS CHARACTER, FRIENDS, AND FINANCES. A.D. 1598.

NEVER in idol of mankind has so much of clay been mixed with the gold as in the making of Henry IV, King of France and Navarre. We pass in a moment from heroism to baseness, from devotion to ingratitude, from the noble and great to the miserably petty. We can scarcely tell how much of the success of the reign is due not to Henry himself but to his trusted friend and adviser, the Duke of Sully. One thing is quite clear: his reign brought solace to France, and forms the opening period of that great age of modern politics, which little as Henry may have understood it, marks the whole difference between the past times of medieval or feudal monarchies, and the coming times in which great and full-grown nations strive together to adjust or to overthrow that large political system, which is called the Balance of Power. The 'Grand Project,' the 'Christian Republic,' may be nothing but a political romance, as it has been called, yet there is in it thus much of essential truth, that it represents the tone of mind prevalent at the time, and gives the French view as to theories of government, as to the relations of nations, as to the way in which the unity of Christendom, of late cleft asunder by the Reformation, might be restored, by means of a federation of European states, presided over by the central authority of the 'great nation.' The reign of Henry IV shows that thoughtful men already recognised the fact that after the first and disruptive period, in which the new opinions grew too fast for the frame-

work of society, and then after the time of reaction, when the old simply strove, and with but limited success, to recover its ground, now at last had arrived an age of equilibrium. In this period, the forces on either side being spent, both parties had begun to reflect on their position, and to count up gains and losses; while a middle party had grown up between them, belonging strictly to neither, though having certain sympathies with both. This middle party found its expression in the triumph of Henry IV and in the general lines of policy which governed his reign.

And the nature, the ministry, the policy, of the King himself partook of this middle character. This is what makes it difficult to draw his picture, and renders it in the main unsatisfactory when drawn. At first he impresses us with a sense of manliness, courage, devotion, power: he is forgiving, unsuspecting, fearless, popular; his good sayings are on every tongue; they show a friendly heart, even when most strongly seasoned with a piquant dash of satire: when we study him more closely, as years pass on, as prosperity tries him with sore temptations, and power, ever growing stronger yet ever undermined by secret plots and perils, tests the stuff of which the man is made, we discern that the unsuspicious frank soldier is gone: we see that selfishness has invaded him, casting out his higher qualities, that his playful satire has changed to bitter mockery, that he strives no longer against evil, that the bad spirit of self-indulgence gets more and more the mastery; and we end by feeling that the hero of Arques and Ivry and of many a forlorn yet triumphant onslaught, has become a reckless gambler and a heartless libertine. The craving for excitement is the same; but, ominous change, the object aimed at has sunk from nobleness to degradation.

The King's face passed through exactly parallel phases. In his youth he was sparkling, witty, the darling of the Court, with close curling hair, bright eyes, comely face, and well-clipped beard and moustache, hiding a somewhat sensual mouth; in full manhood his long hooked nose and pointed chin drew so

close together that, as the wits said, 'between them there was no room for love to roost': his face was wrinkled, crow's-feet puckered up the corners of his eyes, which were still fine though not good, his skin was said to emit an unpleasant odour; his face was that of an old man ere he was fifty. As a youth all had delighted in him, even when he was penniless and his fortunes at their worst; as King, even his favourites and mistresses could not have endured him, but for his royal titles and his lavish gifts.

We have noticed above how he was brought up roughly, often hardly: all his life he bore traces of this early treatment, though as time went on they became more dim. We can see it in his simple tastes, his enjoyment of the hardships of a campaign, his preference for the sound of a drum and fife over the most elaborate efforts of scientific musicians, his relish for camp-fare by a bivouac fire, his activity of body, his long days of hunting or his brisk walks, in which he transacted almost all his business.

His grandfather Henry, and his father Antony, Kings of Navarre, had been poor creatures; buffoons rather than princes; and Henry inherited a touch of their quality: he was ever saying 'good things' with fun and malice in them; he liked those round him to be witty and bright, and to make him laugh; the almost Spanish gravity of his fat and sulky wife, Mary de' Medici, repelled him. There was nothing at which he would not make a mock: even the devotion and unsparing industry of Sully did not escape his gibing tongue; he jested at his minister's wealth, and hinted that his hands were not too clean: the chivalrous religion of that noblest of Frenchmen, Du Plessis Mornay, who had served the King loyally on fifty fields, seemed to the cynical monarch fair ground for sport[1]: as von Ranke says of him 'he loved few (and those unworthily)—he hated no one,—he made fun of all[2].' The want of gravity in his

[1] Speaking to Sully the King used to call Mornay 'the Huguenots' Pope.'

[2] L. von Ranke, Französische Geschichte, ii. p. 77 (ed. 1868).

character, his sudden changes, as we see him now playing with innocent children, now uttering wise counsel with his ministers; at one moment holding dignified reception of envoys, at the next amusing himself with some lively lady, or 'hail fellow well met' with a common soldier;—impress us not as the qualities of a frank and open character so much as the marks of one who craves variety and excitement, and is open to all impressions; these affect him keenly, though only on the surface; they are never deep nor lasting.

Accustomed all his life to command, as a captain rather than as a King, of autocratic temper, shrewd enough and quick of decision, he was apt, in all matters affecting himself, to act on the impulse of the moment, to do just as he liked, to think only of himself, to treat his kingship as his personal attribute. He had neither a sound education nor a good moral nature to guide him. As a boy, he had run wild at will in Béarn: his mother, grave and sweet, had taught him all she could, and what religious impressions he retained had come from her; but as a youth he was flighty and uncertain, and learning stayed not with him. It is interesting, however, to note that he himself puts on record one book which had been 'as a conscience' to him, and had roused his soul to high and noble thoughts and resolves. Once, writing one of his most graceful letters to his Queen, Mary de' Medici, he rejoices that she is reading Plutarch's lives; 'for Plutarch,' he says, 'smiles ever on me with a fresh and novel brightness; to like Plutarch is to like me; for he was the tutor of my youthful days.' He adds that his good mother, who was so anxious for his proper training, placed the book in his childish hands[1].

His preceptor, doubtless at his mother's wish, tried to teach him Greek; the experiment is curious, and worthy of the notice of modern theorists as to the right way of mastering languages; for the preceptor could only 'teach him as one learns one's

[1] Lettres de Henri IV, ed. Xivrey, v. p. 462: 'Me mit ce livre entre les mains, encore que je ne feusse plus qu'un enfant de mamelle.'

mother-tongue, by rote and without precepts[1]; he could neither read nor write the language. He got a few Greek aphorisms off by heart: two of these, Cayet, whose business it was to copy them out fair for the young prince, remembers as having had decided influence on the boy's character: in fact, they may almost be taken as mottoes for his life. The one, Νικᾶν ἢ ἀποθανεῖν, Death or Victory, may be regarded as characteristic of Henry's brilliant and reckless career as a soldier, down to the year 1598; the other, Δεῖ φυγαδεύειν τὴν στάσιν ἀπὸ τῆς πόλεως, Sedition must be banished from the State, expresses fairly enough the chief task of his later life.

In general, Henry was amazingly ignorant, even of things which ought to have been interesting and easy to him: thus he knew absolutely nothing—this typical Frenchman—of geography, outside the borders of France, or of the resources of those neighbouring states with which he was likely to have such critical relations. In fact he really disliked hard work, and even when most pressed would not give more than two hours a day to public business: his active masterful mind enabled him to decide swiftly, though not always soundly; he was cool and clear-sighted, shrewd in seeing his way through the tangles of diplomacy: yet all he did was by fits and starts; nothing could make him sit quietly in his cabinet; in the ante-chamber or the walks of his garden his favourite friends and comrades were hanging about for him: he would jump up from his seat, and escaping from the close room into fresh air, would call one or another to his side, and walking briskly up and down, would discuss the matter in hand, and bring it promptly to decision. And this impatience of work and etiquette, joined with his promptitude of character and quickness of grasp, caused much despatch of business: for Henry would never defer a matter from one day to another, but always decided it, rightly or wrongly, at any rate, swiftly and sagaciously, on the spot. What a contrast he forms to the staid plodding of his stately grandson,

[1] Palma Cayet, Collection Universelle, lvi. pp. 119, 120.

who never neglected business, and never once in all his long life broke the dull and iron laws of etiquette.

Henry was a true Gascon: lively, thoughtless, boastful, vain: no one could more easily be flattered, specially by women: he liked to hear of his own merits told by some ingenious and pretty mouth[1]. The same qualities made him enjoy doing an act of grace: anyone who submitted to him was sure of a ready and gracious pardon[2]. And Sully tells us, though it is perhaps true only of his earlier years, that the King could never easily bring himself to distrust any one[3].

Still, if not distrustful or vindictive, he was very decided in his dealings with any whom he saw to be dangerous to the authority of the monarchy: on this point he was more than vigilant, he was severe, even unjust. Above all he was ungrateful: no services could weigh with him, if the captain or statesman seemed likely to help that party of noble independence, or, to speak more correctly, of noble privilege, which looked to Spain. It was often remarked that those who had been most faithful to him went neglected, while men who had been his bitterest enemies, did they but bow the knee before him, were at once taken into high favour. He evidently calculated with cynical coolness that the devotion of his old friends would stand many shocks, while the newly-awakened reverence of his old foes needed to be warmed and strengthened by the sunshine of royal favour: he had also a clear insight into his true position as lord of all parties, and it was naturally distasteful to him to notice the presumption of the Huguenot chieftains; their aristocratic claims offended him, and their sterner moral code formed an unpleasant contrast. We may say that the King's distinct

[1] Cimber et Danjou, Archives Curieuses, 1^me^ Série, xiv. p. 339: 'Se laissoit aisément flatter, et particulièrement lorsqu'on luy parloit de son mérite.'

[2] See Badoero's report, quoted in Ranke, Franz. Geschichte, ii. p. 64, note: 'é proprio del re perdonare indifferentemente ad ognuno qualsivoglia colpa, mentre la confessi et li domandi il perdono.'

[3] Sully, Œcon. Royalles, iv. 190 (Ed. Écluse). I have made sparing use of this work, in considering the character of Henry IV, for it is written from end to end in the spirit of adulation towards Sully himself (for that harsh personage was as vain as could be) and of flattery to the King's memory.

aim was to render the Kingship strong and firmly fixed above all partisanship or personal factions; and that whoever seemed to him to have a stubborn back and to wear a proud look was sooner or later brought down to the ground. With this aim in view he did not blush to stoop to artifice, even to falseness. When he made a speech at the opening of the Assembly of Notables at Rouen in 1596, he placed Gabrielle d'Estrées behind the arras to hear him; and afterwards, when she expressed wonder that he had condescended to say 'he was willing to place himself in tutelage in their hands,' he replied with a laugh, 'Ventre Saint Gris, it is true: but I interpret that speech with my sword by my side[1].' Fatal though it was to any hope of constitutional life in France, this policy, begun by Henry and carried out with emphasis by Richelieu, was the only line of conduct which, as society had formed itself in the kingdom, could succeed in giving unity and tranquillity to the nation. In carrying out, so far as time allowed, the strict monarchical ideas of his day, in bridling his nobles, in holding down his Parliaments, in doing without the Estates, in creating a firm nucleus of central power, with an Arsenal, a solid little army, and, above all, a mass of bullion safely stored in the treasury, Henry IV fulfilled the true aim and purpose of his life; this is his title to the respect, if not to the gratitude, of his people.

Henry IV was remarkable, not only for his want of gratitude, but for the strength and fickleness of his passions; it would almost seem as if his feelings were simply physical, and that neither memory nor fidelity nor shame entered into them at all. He leaves the fair Gabrielle, his all-but wife, with tears and protestations; follows her from point to point, at each halting-place has one more affecting scene, can scarcely tear himself away at last, is broken-hearted till she shall return. Suddenly he hears she is dying,—she is dead: for a week his grief is terrible; and then he begins to listen to those who hint that he is rid of an embarrassment, that his political aims will be easier now: he makes

[1] L'Estoile (Petitot, I. xlvii. p. 185). A facsimile of Henry's draft of this speech is given in Guizot's History of France, iii. p. 30.

no enquiries, takes no vengeance; but takes instead a new passion, and forgets her utterly, as utterly as if she had never existed. So is it with all, wife, friend, mistress—all find themselves thrown aside and neglected by this prince of fine emotions. In truth, he lived for excitement; and change and movement count for much in such a life. To this are due his wild delight in the chase and his brutal game-laws, which remain as a monument to show how little real love and feeling he had for his subjects: to this we owe the account of his furious gambling, the nights of hot play, the heavy losses, which the nation had to pay. Sully, who had to find the money for all these amusements, reckons (and it gives us his point of view) that the King's pleasures cost the nation twelve hundred thousand crowns a year, 'which would have supported full fifteen thousand foot'—he measures France by her fighting power, and aims always at that[1]. The King having ordered that this money should be paid out of the financial windfalls of each year,—such as confiscated estates, squeezing of tax-farmers, or, at another time, seizure of contraband coin on the frontier,—persuaded himself that it was no burden at all to the state, and that no man need complain of waste, or ask how the King amused himself.

After all it is not at all clear that the King deserves much credit for anxiety as to the prosperity of his people. Remembering his old hungry days in camp, he could good-naturedly wish that every Frenchman had a fat capon in his pot, though he took little pains to get it for him. His taxation to the very end was as oppressive as ever: to reduce the burdens on his people, to live economically, and lessen the cost of the Court, these are things which never occurred to him as possible: though he did make government less onerous, and it is fair to say so, by the care he gave to manufactures, in spite of Sully's disapproval, and to agriculture, of which he was really fond; he used at one time to call daily after dinner for Olivier de Serres' great book

[1] So Sully accounts for his own distaste for manufactures: 'They are bad, being adverse to the making of good soldiers.'

on tillage[1], and read it thoughtfully for half an hour; he imported plants and trees, notably the mulberry, and watched their growth with unflagging interest.

He also took pleasure in building; and, fortunately for France, was willing to believe that public works, roads, bridges, colleges, strongholds, redounded as much to his honour as the erection of unnecessary palaces. Paris felt his hand: she became more sumptuous, though less picturesque and medievally irregular; her streets grew straighter, cleaner, with better footways, and some care of sanitary matters; as in art, so in building, in his day all became more formal and stiff; men no longer painted or wrote or built as their genius moved them, but as the rules of their art required. We feel that the spirit of the age tends to a hard and regular despotism, better indeed than the hot pandemonium out of which Henry had delivered France, but less instinct with warm life, and passing rapidly into absolutism in government and pedantry in art and literature. Two things in the literature of his day are noteworthy: it is the age of Pastorals; the day in which Guarini's Pastor Fido was rendered into every tongue and became the model for a thousand vapid works. The shepherds, the field gods, the nymphs, the damsels, are as little real as the later prettinesses of Watteau. A corrupt age naturally turns to idyllic life, and hopes by contrast to cool the jaded appetite. The other literary phenomenon of the time is the appearance of such works as the piquant and amusing Satire Ménippé, which so largely contributed to destroy what there was of earnestness in the struggle of the League. If pastorals indicate moral corruption, satires go with growing despotism; and we may note this as among the indications that the age was ripe for an absolute monarchy.

Wherein then lay the undoubted claim of Henry to our respect, if not to the title of Great! It lay in this; that he was,

[1] 'Le Théâtre d'agriculture et mesnage des champs,' published in 1600. Olivier de Serres was a Protestant noble of Languedoc, who, after tilling his estates with wonderful success, had described the results and given the theory of his art in this work, the fruit of forty years of industry, attention, and thought.

especially before 1598, a bold, courageous, self-reliant man, with great power of control over others: when they urged him not to risk his life by sleeping in a shed, almost unguarded among his troops, he replied loftily—There was no ground for fear—who ever heard of a King dying in a hovel? words which, like 'Thou carriest Cæsar and his fortunes,' have in them the ring of true greatness. His figure forms a wonderful contrast to those of the vicious and feeble Valois brothers; his vigour and manliness scattered the petty intrigues and factions which had desolated France. And he was a man of quick decision and action following fast. No business would he put off; for he was a man of to-day; if, like his great-grandson Vendôme, he sometimes liked to be lazy, and to let troubles gather round him, he was also, like that brilliant general, fond of suddenly scattering the difficulties which he himself had helped to create, and, as with a flash of lightning, clearing away the gloom. Nor is it small praise that for all his struggling with the herculean task of reducing chaos to order, he did not grow embittered; he was never enough in earnest to be angry, never enough touched with feeling to be vindictive: if he showed no gratitude, he showed no malice: he was always ready to pardon on submission: he was at least good-natured, if not good-hearted. His true title to respect lies, it must be confessed, in his autocratic temper, in his determination to be a true and free King. He saw what was wanted for France—a real master, and he knew he was strong enough to be that. He had in his hands the whole destinies of his country; and in the main swayed them for her good. He could declare war, make treaties, make peace, of his own will: could appoint all his officers and ministers and remove them, none having a right to interfere or even to murmur: he could issue or revoke edicts at pleasure; could, in fact, decree such taxation as he wanted almost without check; and he was in all cases the final court of appeal and fount of justice in matters of law. In a word he held in his own hands all the legal, the legislative, and the executive authority of the realm. France rejoiced to feel his strong rule and curb after the waste

and weariness of the Civil Wars: the cities lifted up their heads, the countryfolk once more tilled the ground with hopefulness.

Round him the King grouped a strange company of ministers: Sully,—whom all hated and feared, the harsh unyielding master of the Arsenal, the terror of all tax-farmers, the decided opponent of the Spanish and Catholic line of policy, the man whom Henry trusted most,—jostled up against Villeroy, of old the creature of Catherine de' Medici, afterwards a warm partisan of the Guises, and Henry's active foe, now apparently his much-trusted minister, head of the pro-Spanish party in the King's counsels. Sillery, who rose from the magistracy, was a diplomatist, and one of those who managed the divorce of Margaret and the marriage with the Florentine Mary de' Medici. Another was Jeannin, president of the Parliament, a great lawyer and pupil of Cujas, who had raised himself by real merit from the bourgeoisie; he also had been a Leaguer, but came over frankly and promptly to the King's side, distinguishing himself afterwards as a diplomatist; he worked harmoniously with Sully, and negociated that treaty of 1609 which assured the practical independence of the United Provinces. These four may be said to have formed the King's Cabinet, in which Sully and Villeroy represented the opposite poles of opinion and policy. Henry seemed to take pleasure in listening to both, and in allowing his deliberations, if not his acts, to have perpetual swing between them.

Behind these lay the darker influences of the Queen and of the reigning mistress. The Court became a hotbed for the intrigues of politicians and gallants; all seemed to be entangled together: the King and Sully, who leant distinctly towards a Protestant policy abroad, were ever countermined by Mary de' Medici and her Concinis, with Villeroy and all her Florentine favourites at her back; these all pulled heartily in the direction of Spain, and seemed determined, whether the King liked it or not, to force on a Spanish alliance, with double marriages and with a relapse into the old intolerant troubles. The Court

itself was imbued with Spanish ideas, and became what Paris had been in the days of the League; the mere outside of fashion showed it; even the King himself wore the black costume we see so often in the portraits of Philip II and his courtiers; he set himself also to study Castilian speech and manners; his preceptor Perez brought into vogue a taste for Spanish literature. The age of Ronsard, who expressed the easy nonchalance and the satiric humour of Henry's earlier days, gave place to the prim literary proprieties of Malherbe, to dreary heroic romances, and to poems false in sentiment and unnatural in expression.

Spain herself, weak though she was and in feebler hands after 1598[1], strained every nerve to thwart the King's more liberal policy. She encouraged the opposition of the Duke of Savoy, intriguing also with the Pope, hoping to stop the settlement of the differences between the Duke and Henry; kept up communications with the still disaffected nobles; had her agents on the frontiers of France, at Metz, at Marseilles, at Bayonne; bore herself still with warlike and threatening aspect on the northern border; and treated the French ambassador at Madrid with haughty and galling contempt. The contradiction, which runs throughout the King's reign, became too great to continue; the tension strained, until at last it gave way, and, at the moment when Henry had completely given himself up to Sully's views, and the Spanish party seemed on the verge of a great defeat, the sudden stroke of the assassin's dagger brought the King's life to a terrible close.

Though Henry had skilfully and patiently overcome so much opposition, and had beaten down one foe after another, still in 1598 his throne was very far from being an easy one, or his country tranquil and content. The greater nobles, whether Protestants, like the Duke of Bouillon, or of the middle party, like the two Birons, or of the old Leaguer party, like the Duke of Épernon, were all alike disaffected and eager for an opportunity of asserting their feudal independence: they would still

[1] Date of the death of Philip II.

need much bridling and a firm hand. Nor were the nobles the only dark cloud of difficulty. The country was in a frightful state: the finances ruin-stricken; France, as Henry himself says, was 'open on every side; her strong points lay unfortified, and devoid of munition of war; her navy was contemptible, her provinces desolate, and even in some part reduced to desert; all subordination was gone; law was no more respected, brigandage prevailed; the throne was tottering.' Only two years before this time, at the siege of Arras, the King had been so miserably hard pressed that, as he says, he had scarce a horse to ride, or a complete suit of armour to wear; 'My shirts are in rags,' he adds, 'my pourpoints out at elbows, my kettle is often empty, and I must go beg a dinner where I may[1].' And Bongars, writing of the state of the country and of the desolation caused by the civil wars, says that the highroads were all so overgrown with thorns and brambles that it was hard to tell where they had been[2]. Wolves had grown bold and fierce, and had multiplied enormously[3]; the misery of the people, as even Sully tells us, had become excessive; their taxes were many years in arrear, so that the King had thought it well in 1598 to forgive their debts for 1594 and 1595[4], in hopes that so the poor folk might be encouraged to make an effort to pay up the rest.

This was a part of the attempt to reduce the finances to order, which occupied some of the attention of the King, and almost all that of Sully, during these years. The King's part in it was, as might be expected, almost unimportant; he may be said to have done his share, when he gave quiet to the realm and withstood the temptations to war which crowded on him, and when he encouraged, as best he could, the progress of agriculture and manufactures. Sully's work was very different: a man of narrow intellect, unbounded self-esteem, rigid temper, harsh manners, he was admirably fitted by nature and education

[1] Œconomies Royalles (Petitot, II. ii. p. 416).
[2] Bongars, Epist. lxxv. ad Camerarium.
[3] Isambert, Anciennes lois françaises, xv. (Juin 1601) p. 248.
[4] Sully, Œc. Roy. (Petitot, II, iii. p. 226) iii. p. 224.

for the work he undertook. This was not the introduction of a sound system of finance, nor an attempt to give play to any true economic principles, nor to find means whereby to solace the burdened state; all that he aimed at was to reduce the accounts to order[1], by organising them, as he might have organised an army, and above all, by setting his foot sharply down on all peculators, all dishonest tax-farmers, all holders of false government securities; by recovering alienated portions of the royal domains he also sought to lessen the burden on the King's purse, while he made it certain that the taxes did not stay, as heretofore, in the tax-gatherers' pockets. It is said that when Sully took this matter in hand not half of the nominal income arising from taxes found its way into the treasury. By strict dealing, and by peaceful secure times, and by the rapid increase of the national wealth, Sully brought about not only an equilibrium between incomings and outgoings, but reformed the Arsenal, set on foot a small but effective army, did much at public works, and, after all, laid by in the Louvre a large sum of money, imitating therein, and more successfully, the policy of Sixtus V[2], in order that his royal master might have it in his power at any decisive moment to throw the weight of a great treasure into the balance. He saw that from the days of Brennus downwards sword and treasure together have been found to outweigh all opposition.

At the beginning of this sixteenth century Louis XII had been content with an income of about two million[3] crowns yearly: under the thriftless rule of Francis I five millions had been pressed from the people: Henry II had six millions and a half, and even with that increase could not do without loans: since his day things had got worse and worse; mismanagement and confusion grew daily greater, the productive power of the country daily less. Under Henry III, with an income of nine

[1] He presented to the King five balance-sheets of a kind; but his accounts rarely balanced.

[2] L. von Ranke, Päpste, iv. § 7.

[3] The crown may be reckoned at $2\frac{1}{2}$ livres.

millions, there was a regular yearly deficit, and very heavy debt incurred. The taxes were higher than men could bear; and still worse, the plundering of them was terrible. Sully tells us that in 1596 only thirteen millions of livres reached the treasury, while the actual taxation amounted to no less than one hundred and fifty millions. Henry IV, on coming to the throne in 1589, found himself already deeply embarrassed, with huge debts to meet, and an ever failing treasury. He had also to provide large sums with which to buy off the malcontent nobles, and to pay and dismiss the clamorous Swiss and German mercenaries.

What could be done to abate so great an evil, which daily threatened to make all government impossible? Du Plessis Mornay tried strenuously and honestly, though unsuccessfully, to make an equilibrium: a Council of Finance was established, which only floundered deeper and deeper in hopeless confusion; it was proposed that the Three Estates should be convoked, but Henry shrank intuitively from a national Council, and called together in its stead an Assembly of Notables, nominees of the Crown, not representatives of the people. These royal nominees met in Rouen in 1596, and tried their best. They found a funded debt of two hundred millions of francs, a yearly income of ten, a yearly deficit of six millions. What could they advise? War was going on, the country ravaged and restless. They made far-reaching and important proposals; it is to be noticed that they made no attempt to couple therewith any constitutional suggestions, or to purchase with the taxation any recognition of the liberties of the subject. Their schemes came to naught, and the ship of state seemed to be slowly settling down: at this worst moment, however, she was already in sight of land, within reach of harbour; the storms of the century were almost over; in still water a cunning hand would detect and close her leaks. It was at this critical moment that 'the great financier of the age,' Rosny, whom we usually call by his later[1] name of Sully, took the

[1] Created Duke of Sully in Feb. 1606.

command of finance, and steered the state safely through its perils.

Rosny had risen at the Court of Henry IV by ready skill, by an indomitable willingness for work, by the favour of Gabrielle, who pitted him against her enemy Sancy [1], still more, by his amazing gifts of organisation, and general probity of character. His very harshness stood him in good stead: he was a man who rather liked to be hated, for vanity sucks her honey even from poisonous flowers; and no thought of the feelings of others stood for a moment between him and the work he undertook. His pride gave backbone to his vanity, which was great; he thoroughly appreciated his dignity as a great noble of France, while he equally enjoyed the feeling of power and the sense of his personal abilities and worth, which he naturally overrated [2]. Placed at the head of the finances in 1597, he became at once Dictator in his own department, and used great power to very happy results. His enemies might cabal against him, and sneer at his enormous wealth, and hint that he who was so inflexible to others had himself hands not too clean [3]; they were unable to shake him, or to undo the great work of his life. He continued to serve his King and his country faithfully: though we need not echo all the tune his trumpet blows for him throughout the 'Royal Economies,' yet we must see that he was a great minister while Henry lived; even after his master's death he retained for many years the

[1] Nicolas Harlay de Sancy was one of the most brilliant and successful ministers of the age. Henry IV sent him as ambassador to England and Germany. He was violently opposed to Gabrielle's marriage-project.

[2] Sismondi, Histoire des Français, xxii. p. 24 (ed. 1839), throws doubt even on his probity: 'While the secretaries of Sully (who are supposed to address the Œconomies to their master) repeat to him in a thousand different ways that he is the ablest and most virtuous of men, their tale often rouses our suspicions both as to the clearness of his mind's view, and as to his perfect uprightness.'

[3] Sully was very rich before he undertook the finances of France; he had made a 'good' marriage, had known how to order his affairs, had engaged in successful speculations. He doubtless used his knowledge and position to enrich himself still farther; but there is no proof that he ever robbed his master.

care of the woods and artillery, though the finances were no longer in his hands.

The problem he had to face was the usual one: How can a financial equilibrium be established? How can money be found to pay the interest on the huge debt of the country, and to carry on the King's government?

There are more ways than one of righting a country's finances. The best and at the same time the most difficult is that of a stern and careful diminution of outgoings, so as to bring the expenditure down to the level of the income. Or, you may increase the income, with new taxes and cunningly-devised burdens; or, most vicious and easiest plan of the three, may contract loans, and leave to posterity the burden of repaying them. Also, the thing may be done in part or in whole by applying sounder rules of economic science, and by so developing the resources of a country, as to bring a larger income out of an unchanged system of imposts: much may be also achieved by improved systems of levying and gathering taxes, so as to render the incidence more equal, and the percentages of the tax-gatherer less ruinous to the state.

Now at this time the first of these remedies was impossible, not only because Henry IV showed no taste for economy in his private life, but also because as France then stood a large expenditure was inevitable both to repair the waste and neglect of the half century past, and also to give the Crown securer footing among discontented nobles at home and watchful enemies abroad. A lower expenditure, then, could hardly be expected; nor would the expedient of fresh loans, so easy at first, succeed in the long run: the debts incurred by the State were already far larger than was wholesome, and fresh borrowing must be avoided if possible. It seemed too as if little could be done by new taxation, where the old taxes had remained for years unpaid from men's inability to pay. Nor, again, did King or minister know anything at that day,—and who did?—of the laws of economic science, nor perhaps could they have applied them, had they known them.

Now Sully, great financier as he has been called, was not a far-seeing or philosophic statesman, but rather a man who took what instruments and processes were ready to his hand; and if one failed, as more than one did, then he would try another. Consequently he has left us no reformed system of finance, nor any statement of principles of economic science; he only showed a great readiness of expedient, and sternness in dealing with men, and a wholesome desire to get all accounts down on paper, and a wish to see them balance at the end, though that triumph of finance was often denied him. Crying evils remained untouched: thus the odious gabelle of salt stood its ground, and indeed survived till the Revolution; it was a tax of the most absurd and oppressive nature, fixing in arbitrary fashion the amount of salt each householder must buy, and compelling him to buy it, while it forbade him, at the same time, to part with it if he did not want it; there could not have been a more irritating or wasteful impost[1]. Consequently also, the basis of true fiscal reform was never laid; the 'taille[2],' which ought to have fallen on real property, as was seen just before the Revolution by Neckar and other financiers, was levied on persons and personal property, so as to relieve the landlord at the expense of labour. It is curious and significant that, while Dauphiny at this time struggled hard, but in vain, to get the taille shifted from personal to real property, a boon so needful for a poor and hilly country, Languedoc, her wealthy neighbour, was actually under the other system, and had her taxation based on real property, a circumstance which, to a large extent, secured her a steady prosperity even in the worst times. Instead of any such wholesome and general relief to the

[1] The prisons of Normandy were full of wretched creatures unable to pay this odious tax: they perished there in crowds; a hundred and twenty dead bodies were taken out on one day. La Vallée, Histoire des Français, iii. 57, note 1.

[2] The *taille*, as it was called, or taxation on real and personal property, is the later Latin *talea* or *tallagium*, so named from the *talea* or *tally* of wood on which the amount of tax, real or personal, due from each man was scored with a knife; L. Lat. *taliare*, Fr. *tailler*, to cut. See Littré and Brachet, s. v. *tailler*.

labourer, in some places harsh laws were enforced against him: thus, in Paris herself a 'Statute of Labourers' was issued by the Provost, regulating the rate of wages, and intended to check servants who were beginning to 'monopolise' together,—an early trades-union,—while a decree came out ordering what clothes these workpeople might or might not wear[1]. Thus, all kinds of curious and offensive, and even noxious, usages prevailed; and there was no attempt to bring them into order.

What Sully, thus indifferent to principles, actually did was this;—he first considered whether any fresh sources of income could be found; such was the 'Pancarte[2],' a sou per livre or pound-weight on all necessaries of life sold in towns; this vexatious tax failed to produce much, and was presently withdrawn, while in its place a heavy addition was made to the odious gabelle on salt, to the taille, and to the wine and spirit duties. Next, he tried to reduce the 'rentes,' or interests payable on loans; but here the burgher-class stood out against him, and showing its teeth, stopped the attempt from going further. Sully had not understood that the interest on a loan can only be safely reduced, when a Government is strong enough to offer, as an alternative, the repayment of the capital lent; which is equivalent to saying, we have borrowed from you at five per centum and now our credit is so good that we can borrow where we will at four per centum; you must therefore either be content with four per centum or we will repay you what you originally lent us.

Sully also established (and this time the resistance though strenuous was short) a new tax on official incomes, whether judicial or financial, named the Paulette, after its inventor[3]. This, a tax of one-sixtieth, was levied on the condition that the offices should henceforward be hereditary. It was an important constitutional step, for it crystallised the bureaucracy of France,

[1] Martin, Histoire de France, x. p. 451, note 2.

[2] First imposed in 1596 by the Notables at Rouen, and abolished by Sully in 1602.

[3] Introduced in 1604, on the advice of Ch. Paulet, Secretary of the Parliament of Paris.

and made it a caste; it gave it solidity over against the old nobility of birth, the aristocracy of the sword, and the later pretensions of wealth; it added one more link to that terrible chain of privilege which weighed so heavily on France till 1789: on the other hand, it was useful as a counterpoise, and as a means by which the monarchy might get its work done without being too much beholden to the older aristocracy. The Paulette became the most popular of taxes, when it was found that it instantly raised the market-price of offices to nearly double their old worth; it was therefore successful, as being both a source of wealth and a means of centralising the governing power of the country.

These, it will be seen, were only expedients. The true success of Sully sprang from his organising power, his thrifty management, his determination to get his money's worth, above all from his swift and terrible punishment of peculators, and destruction of all those leeches, large and small, who sucked the life-blood of the people[1]. He thus stopped the great leaks and runs, he got rid of thieves, did away with many exemptions, reduced the public debt by looking into the titles of the holders, and, in return for heavy taxes, gave to France efficient government and security.

It was wonderful to see how the country answered to his call: how his industrious care embraced almost all things which went to make up the public wealth: and, where Sully failed through narrowness of view, as when he would have even discouraged manufactures, because of their fancied interference with the breed of soldiers, the King's wider and keener sympathies set things in their right path again. From Sully comes the well-known apophthegm 'The two breasts of France are the plough and the cow'; tillage and pasturage he regarded as the true sources of wealth, and disliked all others. Fortunately for France, Henry IV took a broader view, and in spite of

[1] The King in his quaint way once told one of his Intendants of Finance that there was not one of his company but had cost him ten thousand crowns for every tooth in his head.

a shoal of sumptuary edicts, tending to hamper trade and production, still steadily encouraged manufactures. To the King it is that France owes her great textile industry, that of silk: from him came that great edict, which, by allowing the exportation of grain, encouraged production, and for a while delivered the country from dread of famine.

Edicts poured forth on every subject: the rivers, lakes, marshes; the woods, forests, and woodless plains; the different branches of cultivation; the roads and canals, the towns and villages, all received salutary attention: private enterprise was encouraged, while public money was freely spent on public works. Help was given to establish manufactories, and gentlemen were encouraged to undertake them: silk, crystals, glass, cloth of gold, lace work, tapestry, linen, steel, exercised the fine hands and delicate intelligence of the French artist and artisan: 'it would seem,' says Palma Cayet[1], 'as if France desired to claim the just possession of all arts and inventions, for she elaborates them all. And if one would consider her by the side of foreign nations we shall see that the French have always been the first authors of them; only she has this fault—she lacks persistence.'

And the country responded readily: as after a sore pestilence it has been noticed that mankind instinctively become more prolific, as though straining to fill up the blanks caused by the fatal scourge—so now, after that the fields had long been untilled and fallow, while no man cared to build houses, or buy furniture, or wear good clothes, or spend on ornament, France suddenly woke to a sense of delight in restoring what had been lost; a fresh and wholesome glow of activity seemed to pass through all her limbs; the peasant turned gladly to his spade, the builder to his trowel, the weaver to his cloth: the joy of toil for its own sake, the sense of security, the sure hope of profit, the new taste of comfort, the delight of artistic harmony, all were felt at once: the country for years blessed the name of the great minister who had so beneficently roused her from her lethargy.

[1] Chronique Septennaire (Collection Michaud, I. xii. 2. p. 259).

France not only thus recovered strength at home, but put forth new shoots in far-off lands: in spite of Sully's narrow spirit, which would have discouraged all foreign enterprise, Henry IV turned his attention to colonial matters, and warmly seconded the efforts of those who sought to create a New France on the North American Continent. It is in these years that the French colonies in Canada began to be formed: De Monts and Champlain, gentlemen of Saintonge, in the years between 1604 and 1608, colonised the peninsula of Acadia and Quebec, districts still peopled by the descendants of these first settlers, and still showing signs of their old national character, though they have long ceased to form part of the French dominions. And at the very end of his reign, amid more exciting and nearer subjects which crowded on the King's attention, he was engaged in organising a great open company to trade with the far West. It was not the fault of Henry IV that France has failed to win colonial success, or to organise associations capable of rivalling the Dutch and English India Companies. The genius of France has ever preferred to exercise her wings on other flights than these.

Henry IV himself has partly provided us with the means of understanding the immense change in the well-being of his country effected between 1598 and the end of his reign. In 1609 he called on Sully for a complete report[1] on the state of the realm, and on the improvements still to be made. The King desired to stand as it were on the height to which he had raised his country, to survey her broad plains and rich river-courses, her happy cities teeming with industry, her strength and youthful smiles. The report was never finished: for the King's death arrested it, and his schemes for the well-being of the nation were stayed: but there is a great pleasure in thinking that the last months of his reign were not merely occupied by preparations for war, nor by dreams of new European political combinations, but by fruitful plans for rendering France supreme in civilised arts and knowledge, and for turning her new

[1] Œconomies Royalles (Petitot, II. viii. chapters i, ii).

prosperity to the best uses. The impulse he had given to his country carried her on through many difficulties, through waste and evil counsels, even through the trials of a rage for glory: unfortunately, the tendencies towards absolute rule, fostered by the King's temper and that of his minister, grew stronger with the strength of the country; until under Louis XIV, the true successor of Henry IV, we see the despotic King in a blaze of glory, splendidly guiding the dazzled country through great European efforts towards the catastrophe which overwhelmed the whole fabric of absolute governments and brought the monarchy to its well-merited fall.

CHAPTER II.

France under Henry IV. A.D. 1598–1610.

The best part of the history of these twelve years (1598–1610) has been touched on already. At home France shows a happier face, though her people are still in wretched plight; the foreign dealings and policy of the King are not so satisfactory. It must ever be doubtful how far he understood, or meant to act on, the 'political romance' so minutely described in the 'Royal Economies': his murder draws an impenetrable veil over his purposes. It is even hard to say what for several years was the King's policy. If Sully be right, he must throughout have been, secretly or openly, hostile to Spain: yet the circumstances of his life, and the personages surrounding him, often combine to make us suspect that he himself for a long time had no very marked principles of policy. It may be that the difficulties of his position at home, face to face with disaffected nobles, who were often, if not always, allied with Spain, made it prudent for him to conceal the real bent of his political aims.

Still, there can be no doubt as to the main tendency of these aims, as they were guided by Sully.

He would group all the Protestant powers of Europe round the throne of France, including under that head even the Republic of Venice, which, in anger with the Pope, seemed likely to throw off obedience to the Papal See; and by upholding the weak, and allying himself with the strong, would countervail the pride and ambition of Austria and Spain: this was the known and established policy of the French Crown;

and in the main lines of this policy things went till the Austrian alliance in the reign of Louis XV brought all to confusion and contempt. Thus Henry busied himself, above all, with England: conferring first with Elizabeth and then with King James,—and he soon found the difference between the woman who was a man, and the man who was a woman: then he took pains, with scarcely an attempt at secrecy, that the Dutch under Maurice Prince of Orange should not faint in their struggle and be crushed; he sent Bongars, the Calvinist historian [1], to the Landgrave of Hesse, the Rhine-Princes, and other Calvinistic Germans, and warmly encouraged their suspicions against the Catholic and High Dutch Princes of Austria and Bavaria: he allied himself with the League of the Swiss, with the staunch city of Geneva, which lay in such peril from Savoy, and above all with the 'Graubünden,' the Leagues of the Grisons, which secured him an entrance into Italy, close to the Venetian frontier, by which he might outflank the Spaniards on the Upper Po, and get round the gigantic barrier of the Alps: he kept up friendship with the Lutheran Northern powers, Denmark and Sweden, hoping to allay their ancient jealousies, and bring them to content and harmony. Nor did he forget that old friend of the Most Christian King, the Turk; he renewed the threads of friendship with the Sultan, and obtained for France a monopoly of trade in the East [2].

Yet the King was not unmindful of his middle position. While on the one hand, the old Spanish intolerance, however weakened, still survived; and, on the other, the Huguenot fanaticism and republicanism, aristocratic or democratic, still smouldered, ever threatening to burst forth in flame, Henry also followed his old policy, that of the 'Politique' Catholics, with its subordination of theology to politics, its stem-principle of toleration, its sarcastic indifference.

[1] Editor of the collection of historians on the Crusades, the well-known 'Gesta Dei per Francos.'

[2] La Vallée, Essai sur les relations de la France avec l'Orient, Revue Indépendante, 25 Nov. 1843.

In his Court the Spanish party was very strong, and looked with malign jealousy on the power exercised over the King by 'the charming Gabrielle,' who was known to be straining every nerve to get Henry divorced from his dissolute spouse Margaret of Valois, in order that she might succeed to her place. Were she successful, the Spanish party believed that the King would openly declare himself head of the anti-Spanish side in Europe: were she out of the way, they thought they could bring about his marriage with Mary de' Medici, who would, they knew, be their warm friend and partisan. At Whitsuntide it was the custom in France to confess and communicate: and etiquette insisted that the King should separate himself from his mistress, that they might both perform these duties before meeting again. So, at the Whitsuntide of 1599, sorely against her will, the Duchess of Beaufort (for that was now her title) went to Paris into a kind of retreat at the house of Zamet, the King's money-lender and complaisant friend. There, whether by poison, or from effects of the journey and emotions and apprehensions of evil, the poor thing sickened at once and miserably died. The King was soon consoled for his loss; marriage-negociations, which turned chiefly on the dowry, went on merrily at Florence: the Spanish party breathed again, and hoped ere long to bring things round as they would, to get back the Jesuits into France, and to put an end to any help to the insurgent Provinces.

The country was still in great confusion, and the discontent of the nobles brooded, threatening tempest; those of the old Politique-party, Montmorency, Biron, and others, who deemed themselves neglected, were specially sullen: the Duke of Savoy came into France to negociate as to the unsettled question of Saluzzo, which Henry claimed as being of old a fief of Dauphiny, and the ownership of which had been left unsettled at the Peace of Vervins. The Duke claimed (as the price for his friendship, which he deemed essential to the King if he would restore the influence of France in Italy) not only Saluzzo[1], but also the right to recover Geneva and take a long-coveted vengeance on

[1] To be held however as a fief of the French crown.

her. But Henry cared little for Italian politics, and was not thinking of campaigns across the Alps, so that the Duke's bait was not taken, and Geneva was saved. On the other hand, the King got the Duke to sign an agreement that in three months' time he would cede either Saluzzo, or the districts of Bresse and Bugey on the right bank of the Rhone between Geneva and Lyons: after which the Duke went back to his States.

He had seen the unsettled condition of France, and was told that the moment the King's back was turned, the nobles of the Spanish party would rise in revolt: so he determined, though Sully with some emphasis had shown him the King's Arsenal, to cede neither one district nor other, believing that Henry would not venture on the risks of war. He secured the friendship of Biron, who seemed to him the most important of the discontented nobles, by promising him his third daughter in marriage: it would have been a great alliance for that boastful personage; for beside bringing him a large dower, she was a cousin of the Emperor, and niece of the King of Spain. In return Biron undertook to set up the standard of princely independence, and by a new War of the Public Weal to restore to each great lord the power his forefathers had enjoyed or claimed. The intrigue embraced the Count of Auvergne [1], the Constable Montmorency, the Duke of Montpensier and others: it is said that the outline of it was communicated to the malcontent Huguenots, though they had the good sense and patriotism to stand aloof [2]. This perhaps, as well as the ridicule with which the King and Cardinal du Perron had contrived to cover the noblest man of the time, the aged Du Plessis Mornay, by a conference in which he was convicted—not of a false or foolish book,—but of half-a-dozen careless or incomplete quotations, made Henry think it time to appease the Huguenots again: as in the civil wars a defeat used to bring them good terms, so now while the King

[1] Charles of Valois, natural son of Charles IX; Henry IV used to nickname him 'the prodigal son.'

[2] D'Aubigné, Hist. Univ. L. V. c. xiii. pp. 671, sqq.

gave the Catholics the keen pleasure of a polemical triumph, he at last carried out the stipulations of the Edict of Nantes, and made the position of the Protestants in France secure.

All went well for Henry's plans: the Huguenots were quiet, the arsenal and finance under the sagacious management of Sully ready at a moment's notice, when news came of the great victory of Prince Maurice at Nieuport. With a mixed force of Dutch, English, Germans, and French he had fallen on the Spaniards and had destroyed their whole army; it was the greatest blow that Protestantism had struck for fifty years[1]. Spain was completely crippled, there was nothing to fear from her; and Henry, seeing that the moment was good, declared war on the Duke of Savoy.

Sully had already transported his war-material to Lyons, and was prepared to prove the efficiency of his new guns, and the force of his new system of artillery. War was at once carried across the frontier: the Duke was in fact surprised. Biron, traitor though he was, in spite of himself mastered Bresse; Lesdiguières easily took the town of Montmélian, the key of Savoy, and beleaguered its citadel; Chambéry, the capital, surrendered to the King at once. Sully, keenly watching over his much-cherished artillery, seemed by his stern aspect to scare away all treason and all disaffection. France remained tranquil; the castle of Montmélian, fondly deemed impregnable, fell before siege-guns such as had never before been used; and the Duke of Savoy, seeing himself beaten, sued for peace. A treaty was signed (17 January, 1601) by which the Duke retained Saluzzo, ceding in exchange for it Bresse and Bugey, Valromey and Gex; the very terms that he had slighted before he was prostrate were now wisely granted him unchanged. Here again moderation was wisdom. Saluzzo, across the Alps, in the upland country south of Turin and north of Nice, was outside the true political boundaries of France, and could only have been a source of temptation and trouble in time to come: but Bresse and Bugey fill up the angle between

[1] Michelet, Henri IV et Richelieu (xi. p. 66. ed. 1857).

the Saone and the Rhone, connecting Dauphiny with the Duchy of Burgundy, laying the foundations for the later acquisition of Franche-Comté, assuring the all-important safety of Lyons, and,—the point on which Henry doubtless laid most stress, —securing safe communications with Switzerland through Geneva.

While the war was going on, the Papal divorce from Margaret of Valois had come in, and the King had completed the negociations for his marriage with Mary de' Medici; she with great pomp had come to Lyons, where he met her. In passing through Avignon she had already shown clearly which side she would take in the politics of the day: she let the Papal authorities there know that hers would be the Spanish not the Protestant policy. Yet it is one of the singular contradictions of the age—that, while she was coming to be the nucleus of the Spanish party at the French Court, her dower was actually paying for the Savoy campaign, a campaign really directed against Spanish influence, and largely instrumental in securing the independence of that 'Rome of Calvinism,' Geneva. Perhaps the worst result of this marriage was that it brought the King into closer connexion with Italian politics; and led him, when umpire between his old friends the Venetians and his new friend the Papacy, again to show his ingratitude on a larger scale than usual. For, instead of supporting the Republic, which first of European states had hastened to recognise him in 1589, he, as arbiter (in 1606), decided in favour of Paul V against his friends, and against the very principle on which his own throne rested, the principle that sovereign authority is derived from God, and that the Papacy has no power over it. Yet now by his decision the right of jurisdiction over spiritual persons claimed by the Pope, to the detriment of the independence of the Republic, was, with some thin varnish over it, fully conceded; though the Venetians saved their honour, the substantial victory, thanks to Henry, lay with Paul V[1].

The marriage with Mary de' Medici brought the King some

[1] L. von Ranke, Päpste, Bk. vi. § 12.

sons[1] to secure the succession, the thing he had been most anxious for; it brought little else. Henry scarcely concealed his dislike for his fat, heavy spouse, with her cold ways, her almost Spanish gravity, her severity towards the loose life which had been the rule of the Court hitherto. She was more than suspected of taking an active part in those political intrigues which fill up the rest of the reign.

The end of the war with Savoy mortified and disappointed the Duke of Biron: all his schemes were paralysed, and had he been a wiser man, he would have promptly returned to the King, thereby winning his ready pardon, and once more enjoying his favour. Henry would have been sure to treat him well after seeing him in the ranks of his opponents. Biron, however, was angry, offended, proud, ambitious: he would be the Bourbon of another generation, would make himself independent, lead the nobles of France to their rights, and resting on Spain and Savoy, bring down the royal power. The King's captivity, even his death and that of the Dauphin, were whispered. Biron, representing the old royalist moderates, should move one side of the country: the Duke of Bouillon, as head of the Huguenots, should take up a hostile position on the northern frontier, at Sedan: it was proposed by them to return to their old political idea, an aristocratic republic, with the Count Palatine as Protector. The King, to rid himself of Biron for a while, and to give him a chance of thinking of other things, sent him (in 1601) as ambassador to Queen Elizabeth. His haughty temper and the disorderly behaviour of his followers, roused the hot spirit of the Londoners. The Queen herself, showing him the Tower of London with its ghastly garniture of heads of traitors, the last of the grim company being that of Essex, took occasion to give him a broad hint: Essex, she said, had perished as a rebel;—and she added 'if my brother would believe my words, heads should fall in Paris as well as in London[2].' Biron would not listen to any hint: he miscalculated

[1] Louis the Dauphin (afterwards Louis XIII) was born 27 Sept. 1601.
[2] L'Estoile, Supplément (Petitot, I. xlvii. p. 323).

his own strength, and misread the King's temper. When Henry had all the threads of the plot in his hands, he sent for the Duke, and pressed him once and again to confess and receive the royal pardon: Biron was stubborn and harsh; he knew not how much the King knew, and was coldly silent. Then after several warnings, and very reluctantly[1], the King ordered his arrest. He was taken, tried, found guilty on the plainest evidence, and, to his own immense astonishment, forthwith beheaded: to the last he could not believe that Henry would strike down his former comrade, the man whose sword for his sake had so often leapt from its scabbard in those old happy days of trouble and wild fighting. It was the first great instance of that royal repression of the prouder nobles which becomes the recognised policy under Richelieu, and which can be traced, in milder forms, because more severe ones were not needed, throughout the reign of Louis XIV.

Behind Biron were 'the prodigal son,' the Count of Auvergne, and the Duke of Bouillon: Auvergne was pardoned; two years later, being detected in a political intrigue with Henriette of Entragues, his sister, who was eager to avenge herself on the King for the base deception by which he had ruined her, he was condemned to life-long prison. The Entragues plot was a sore blow to the King's reputation: it brought to light the scandals of his inner life; he felt it bitterly himself. 'Whenever,' says the Spanish Ambassador, 'the King spoke to me of the matter, he turned pale, and seemed himself to be the culprit,' as indeed he was. The Count of Auvergne, Henriette's brother, was banished; Henriette herself—the King could do no less—was freely pardoned. There remained Bouillon: he, seeing that the King was quite in earnest, lost heart, and fled into Germany: and thus ended the alarming conspiracy of 1602. Behind the whole, but safe, was the Queen herself, who helped

[1] We can see from the Vie et Mort du Maréchal de Biron (Archives Curieuses, xiv. p. 107) how many chances the King gave him. It is probable that, but for the Dauphin, Henry would have pardoned him. Archives Curieuses, xiv. p. 115.

the rebels where she could, and tried to protect them when detected: she was attached to Spain, and also deeply mortified by the King's neglect of her and his shameless infidelities. She surrounded herself with intriguing shifty Italians, such as Concini, a Florentine adventurer, and his wife Leonora Galigai, the Queen's chamber-woman.

They pushed the King well-nigh to desperation: and though, to satisfy the Catholics, he showed himself very devout and openly attentive to all ceremonies and duties, while he not only recalled the Jesuits, but took one of them, that supple courtier, Father Cotton, as his Confessor[1], still from this time he seems to have followed the anti-Spanish policy more steadily than before. It is one of the many contradictions of his reign. With Sully by his side he often paced up and down the great Arsenal, now teeming with efficient and terrible engines of war, or looked at the accounts of his ever-growing treasure, and felt comforted by a sense of strength and by 'the ingredients and drugs,' as Sully called them, 'suitable for the cure of the worst maladies of the State.'

Solaced hereby, Henry resolutely set himself to reduce the kingdom to order. The North and the South were still heaving and threatening: he first (1605) went down into the South, and 'shortened,' as he would call it, some of his troublesome subjects; in the Limousin 'some ten or twelve heads flew,' says Sully[2]. Languedoc and Provence also felt his hand; down went castles and strongholds; he remembered them well of old and their use; and the turbulent hot-blooded nobles of the South bowed their necks to the yoke. He then summoned Bouillon to court; the Duke refused to come, and made as

[1] This was in 1603; and there came out an epigram on it:—

'Autant que le Roy fait de pas,
Le père Cotton l'accompagne;
Mais le bon Roy ne songe pas
Que le bon Coton vient d'Espagne.'

L'Estoile, Supplément (Petitot, I. xlvii. p. 420). Cotton, a soft and supple preacher, is recorded to have preached before the King, and, to the astonishment of all, to have prefixed to the name of Calvin the title of Monsieur.

[2] Économies Royales (Petitot, II. vi. p. 284).

though he would stand at bay at Sedan his capital, calling on the Huguenots in a fiery manifesto, and gathering what strength he could. But Henry marched on Sedan; the Duke's heart once more failed him, and again he fled to Germany. The King contented himself with garrisoning the strong frontier-town, and showed no rancour towards his rebellious friend. The chief men thus quelled, Henry now followed the wise policy of placing a royal officer by the side of each governor of a province, to look after him and keep him in check; while each important city and stronghold was commanded by some trustworthy soldier, who would not be likely to play the King false[1].

The remainder of his life was a time of complete quiet at home, during which he and Sully strenuously added to the nation's fighting power, and watched for the time when they might interfere in the complications now rapidly covering the face of Europe. In the tranquillity of these years we may calmly consider the historic problem of the Christian Republic. French historians are much divided respecting it, for while they wish to believe in so splendid a conception of the international position of France, as the great central figure round which all the rest are grouped, their historic sense and judgment compel them to doubt, if not to deny, the genuineness of the document on which it rests. For the historic foundation is very flimsy, and can be given in a few words. The great scheme is to be found in the latter part of the 'Œconomies Royalles' of Sully, drawn out at full length, and given as the European plan which Henry was about to carry out in arms, when his hand was arrested by Ravaillac's knife. But the literary history of the 'Économies' is curious, and throws great doubt on the genuineness of the scheme. After the Duke of Sully retired from active life, he employed his well-earned leisure in superintending the construction of his Memoirs. They were compiled in an unpleasant style by secretaries, though they contain many papers by his own hand. As they

[1] L. von Ranke, Französische Geschichte, ii. p. 80.

wrote, the secretaries submitted all they had done to the great lord himself for his gracious approval. The inevitable result is that his own character and actions are put in the very best light, and a certain sense of doubt at once arises; and this increases when we find that the statements made are not always borne out by independent and contemporary documents. Be this as it may, the first and second folio volumes were published in Sully's lifetime, under his eye[1]. The remainder did not appear till twenty-eight years later, in 1662, long after his death; and it is this latter part which contains the scheme of a Christian Republic. It is not then the account of a contemporary, but a memoir made up many years after the time to which it refers.

Next, no other writer of the age alludes to it: it would have been communicated, more or less fully, to several of the Cabinets of Europe, yet dead silence prevails: no minister, for example, of either Elizabeth or James alludes to it. This, taken with the weakness of the evidence in the 'Économies'[2], is conclusive against the genuineness of the scheme with its 'magnificent chimera' of an European Amphictyonic Assembly, from which Russia as 'in large part still idolatrous, and in the rest schismatic,' and Turkey as utterly miscreant, are together excluded; the Tzar or Grand Duke of Muscovy must lose what he has in Europe and be relegated to Asia; and the Sultan of Turkey with him. The Austro-Spanish power (and this is meant to be the sting of the whole) loses all it has in Germany, in Italy, and in the Netherlands, retaining only Spain

[1] The title runs thus, 'Mémoires des sages et royalles Œconomies d'estat Domestiques politiques et militaires de Henri le Grand,' and the edition is known by three V's, coloured green, and often entitled the edition 'aux trois V vertes'; it has feigned printers' names; is said to have been printed at Amsterdam, though really at Sully; nor is it dated, but came out in 1634. The Duke died in 1641. The third and fourth volumes were printed at Paris much later, 1662.

[2] The Abbé de l'Ecluse in his audacious 'Mémoires de Max. de Béthune, Duc de Sully,' liv. xxx. (Vol. VIII. p. 304) has a long note of amazement that any one can doubt the genuineness of the scheme; yet even he confesses, 'On ne le voit dans aucun des historiens, auteurs de Mémoires et écrivains et contemporains de ce Prince.'

and the Mediterranean Islands, with the African, American, and Indian possessions, which are to be disposed of as principalities for the different princes of the House of Hapsburg.

The scheme itself, these matters cleared off, is splendidly audacious. It is a grand Republic of fifteen states: at its head, nominally at least, were to be the two great Elective Overlordships, the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy; then three elective monarchies, Hungary, Poland, Bohemia; four Republics,—Switzerland, a federal one, with Franche-Comté, Alsace, Tirol, and some lesser districts added; Italy, a Ducal Republic, embracing Genoa, Florence, Mantua, and other central Italian duchies (Southern Italy was to be under the Pope, Northern Italy divided between Venice and Lombardy); Venice, a 'Seignorial' Republic, to be strengthened with Sicily; and lastly Belgium, a Provincial Republic of the seventeen Provinces, from which certain portions were to be plucked off; then came six hereditary monarchies—France at their head, 'with the sole glory of an equitable distribution,' though this 'sole glory' was to be compatible with the addition of Artois, Hainault, Cambrai, Tournai, Namur, and Luxemburg, which were to be ceded to her, and erected into ten princedoms for ten French grandees; England, the next hereditary Monarchy, was similarly to have carvings out of Limburg, Brabant, Malines, and Flemish dependencies, for eight 'princes or milords of that nation'; then Spain, Denmark, Sweden, Lombardy. These fifteen powers, of very different structure, dimension, and strength, were to remain in a happy equilibrium, by the help of the great Council above-mentioned. The scheme pays much attention to the religious difficulty of the time. There are, it says, three faiths in Europe: the Roman, the Lutheran, and the 'Reformed.' Italy and Spain are purely Catholic; France is mixed, and has toleration of the weaker; Germany is mixed, of all three forms, which live side by side; and the others are for the main part Protestant, though not without an infusion of Catholics. Each people must be secured in the faith it has chosen: Italy and Spain will not need or have any toleration,

having no real differences to tolerate; as to the others, toleration will be the marked characteristic of France, not perhaps of the rest. There are in the scheme many phrases which have dazzled Frenchmen since that time: the language of Napoleon III often seemed to echo the ideas of the Christian Republic.

It must not be supposed that Henry IV had any such plan neatly drawn out, and ready for execution, when he made his preparations for appearing in Germany: on the contrary, he was not at all the man to have worked out any such elaborate design: for he had neither knowledge nor inclination for it. And besides this, there is internal proof which shows that it did not come from his hand: how could he, the tamer of the noblesse, who knew them so well, and was ever on his guard against them, have dreamt of proposing to carve out ten principalities on his northern frontier for ten great Lords of France?

Yet we must not absolutely deny the existence of any 'great design' of the kind. It was an age of political speculations: all men's attention was called to international questions, or to enquiry into the nature of states within their own borders: the classical examples were much in vogue: men asked themselves as to Empires, as to Republics; the pen kept pace with the sword, and showed its new power in swaying public opinion. 'Learning,' as Hallam says of this time, 'was employed in systematic analyses of ancient or modern forms of government'; these were the days of Bodinus' great work De Republica[1], now came out that singular collection of little books the 'Elzevir Republics': the minds of men had passed from the Utopias of the previous age to more practical speculations as to what State-systems existed, or might exist. They were conscious that Europe had entered on an entirely new phase of being; and were eager to see how she would group herself, what would be the form of equilibrium to which they hoped she was tending. The great struggle of the Thirty Years' War in Germany is heralded by these

[1] Published in 1577 and 1586.

anxious speculations; for the true decision of the form of European politics could never be come to, till Germany had fought out the still unsettled questions which vexed her from the Alps to the Baltic. The temper of mind corresponds to that which, in a somewhat similar age, agitated the French nation under Napoleon III, and led to maps of reconstructed Europe, and speculations on the equilibrium of states and wars made 'for an idea.' Therefore there is nothing improbable in the existence of the scheme of a Christian Republic before 1610; rather, it is very credible; and if we may trust Sully (in the earlier part of the 'Économies') we may trace the genesis of some plan of the kind, though doubtless not so elaborate, in the sagacious speculations of Queen Elizabeth. Sully states distinctly that he and the Queen discussed the great project in 1601, and that she first sketched out the plan of it, which in outline answers to that of the Christian Republic[1]: on her death the matter seems to have been re-opened to King James, who characteristically shrank from anything so large and decisive; though the young prince Henry, perhaps with an eye to a French marriage, professed his hearty liking for it. But James drew off from the French side, and in 1604 made a separate peace with Spain.

We shall not be far wrong if we say that during the last years of the life of Henry IV he cherished hopes of overthrowing the Austro-Spanish domination in Europe, by means of a combination of French with Dutch and North German interests; that England failed him, through her insular views, and the temper of her new monarch; that this led him all the more to watch the movements in Germany and to strive to settle the outstanding Dutch struggle in favour of the Provinces; and in the end made him once more buckle on his armour for what might have been a decisive war: we may even go farther, and believe that Henry had formed large plans for the aggrandisement of the crown, not in the least plans of the lofty and disinterested kind attributed to him by Sully. Of this

[1] Économies Royales (Petitot, II. iv. pp. 40, sqq.)

we have an account, which is probably correct, in Richelieu's Memoirs[1]: the Cardinal describes him as opening out his plans in 1610 to the Queen: 'to reduce to his obedience Milan, Montferrat, Genoa, Naples; to present most of Milan and Montferrat to the Duke of Savoy, taking in exchange Nice and Savoy; to make Piedmont and the Milanese a kingdom; to call the Duke of Savoy (having lost his old territories) King of the Alps; and thus to secure the approaches of France into Italy: on the other side, having shown himself to the Italian princes as their friend—(one fancies one hears the voice of Napoleon the Third!)—to pass into Flanders and Germany, in order to wear out his enemies by fanning into flame the smouldering variances between North and South Germany, perhaps to make the Rhine his frontier, with three or four strong fortresses on it[2].'

We may conclude finally, that the Christian Republic is not a formed scheme of Henry's planning, but a romance, based on facts, and encouraged by the bold projects of Queen Elizabeth, and the war-loving energy of the Duke of Sully.

And the German frontier-lands now loudly called for the attention of Europe. The difficulties between the Pope and Venice had been settled without an outbreak (1606–1607): after the close of the three years' siege of Ostend (1601–1604) the Spaniards were so utterly exhausted that they could make no use of their triumph, and their efforts became feeble in the Netherlands, while the Dutch fleets destroyed their commerce: the intervention of France, through the President Jeannin, had been crowned with another diplomatic triumph; the party of Olden-Barneveldt, the commercial aristocracy, had a majority in the Provinces in favour of peace, while Maurice of Nassau and the democratic element in the country wished still for

[1] These famous Memoirs, as to which there was so much doubt and controversy (Voltaire being much mixed up in it), were safely housed and kept from view in the 'Dépôt des affaires étrangères' at Paris; there they were at last unearthed in 1823 (after a dusty sleep of nearly two hundred years), and published by Petitot in his Mémoires.

[2] Richelieu, Mémoires (Collection Michaud, 2me Série, vii. pp. 11, 12).

war:—it is the same division of interests and opinions which reappears with such fatal violence in the days of William of Orange and the De Witts. In 1607 a truce was signed between the Archdukes representing the Spanish interest, and the States General; it was guaranteed by France, she and England taking up the position of protecting powers. After an uneasy period of about two years, during which war seemed once more imminent, Henry stood firm, in spite of all baits and threats from Spain; and in April 1609, thanks chiefly to the unwearied skill and urgency of Jeannin, seconded by the English, a great truce for twelve years was signed by Spain and the United Provinces. Though it carried no recognition of Dutch independence, it was in fact a declaration that Spain must at last abandon her attempts to reduce the stubborn spirit of the 'beggars of the sea': the Dutch got rights of trade to the Indies, and the Zealanders, by holding firmly the mouths of the Scheldt, strangled Antwerp to the profit of Amsterdam.

Thus closed the most glorious struggle of modern times: for forty years the simple burghers and seafaring-men of the Provinces had fought almost singlehanded, few, with little resources, against the pride and power of the Spanish Empire-monarchy in the height of its splendour. At every stage of the conflict they had been on the point of being crushed: yet they survived, and saw with hope their own strength slowly growing, and their enemy's giving way. The deep meadow-lands, and sluggish river-mouths of the Provinces bred truer men, and gave a sounder wealth of commerce than Spain, with all her navies and her rich and varied soil, could command. The tenacious Low-German character of the Dutch: their secular love of freedom; the grave and lasting nature of their religion, joined with the peculiarities of the land they dwell in, wore out the almost equally tenacious pride, the fanaticism, the great war-power of the Spaniards.

Here then as well as in Italy all was quiet. The Venetians, the Pope, the Dutch, were all Henry's grateful friends: there

remained only Germany to be considered. And there things were growing daily more uneasy. The long period of tranquillity from the Peace of Augsburg in 1555, broken only by the quiet and steady advance of the Catholic reaction, was now fast coming to an end. The violent persecutions began to bear fruit; the Austrian power was visibly embarrassed, while the Protestants of North Germany grew daily more restless and conscious that the settlement of Augsburg could not much longer bear the strain. In 1594 the Protestant Princes had sketched the plan of a league at Heilbronn; they had renewed it at Heidelberg in 1603, showing by the place chosen the importance attached to the Elector Palatine, Frederick IV, and to the Calvinist element in the German resistance to Rome. No action was taken for a while, though the Catholic princes were under the fanatical influence of the Archduke Ferdinand of Styria, afterwards Emperor. But in the Slavonic populations under the Austrian power the fermentation against Catholic repression was so violent that in 1609 the Emperor Rudolf was fain to grant religious liberties to Hungary, Austria, and Moravia, and to issue for the kingdom of Bohemia a 'Letter of Majesty,' which in fact granted full toleration and almost independence. Important as these movements were, and certain presently to bring on a collision, it was not on these far-off countries that the eyes of Henry were fixed. The Rhine seemed to him to be the critical line: there he steadily made ready to interfere.

The Rhine-land was the home of all the three Communions; here the Calvinists were very strong. On the Upper Rhine the Calvinistic Swiss Protestants prevailed: in the middle district the key was held by the Lower Palatinate, and that was Calvinistic; this part was open to French influences, from the side of Metz and Lorraine, while it was also crossed by a strong chain of fortresses of the Roman obedience, the three Archbishop-Electorates and the ancient Episcopal cities along the left bank, relics of the old Roman frontier. These Ecclesiastical Princes cut deep into the more Protestant part of

Germany, partly severing the reformed inhabitants of Brandenburg and North-Eastern Germany from their Dutch friends; threatening also to France by making a kind of bridge between the Austrian power and the Low Countries. In this part, towards the lowest or northernmost end, the key to the lower Rhine is the Cleves-Jülich district; Jülich lying alongside the Electorate of Cologne, between the rivers Rhine and Maas, and Cleves just below it, on both sides of the Rhine, reaching down to the United Provinces; Gelderland forming its northern frontier. These two Duchies, together with certain lesser domains, all grouped together so as to close in the Electorate of Cologne, were in the hands of John William, Duke of Cleves, and might any day drop out of them on his death. They formed a rich and prosperous group, with much traffic and Protestant-refugee industry; they were strategically very important, as a highway into the Provinces, as commanding the Rhine, that artery of traffic for central Europe, and as certain in Protestant hands to separate the Catholic territories from one another. In short, it was seen that trouble must come of it; and the Protestants of Germany accordingly made a fresh and closer Evangelical Union, in which Lutherans joined with Calvinists, and attempted to forget, in face of common peril, their unworthy bitterness and alienation. This was in 1608: the Heilbronn pact was renewed: the Elector Palatine Frederick IV was again its head; Neuburg, Baden, Brandenburg, and Würtemburg, united 'for the maintenance of peace and of the constitution of the Empire,' while, shortly after, several princes and cities adhered to the Union. It was with this group that Henry IV kept up close communications. He and they alike watched with anxious forecast the affairs of the little Duchies; they, because the district connected their interests with those of the Dutch Calvinists, and he, because in Catholic hands they would definitely cut France off from North Germany, and enormously increase the power of the Imperial Austrian House. It was, in short, the critical point for the time, and all men looked eagerly to see how it might go, except perhaps James I of England,

who by this time had made friends with every one all round, and was consequently of no account.

In 1609 John William of Cleves died without heirs. Eight claimants sprang up at once, the Elector of Brandenburg, Pfalz-Neuburg, Pfalz-Zweibrücken, and others, and behind them stood the Empire itself, claiming a right to interfere as overlord, till the abstruse question of the succession should be settled. The Dutch and Spaniards also took a deep interest in it: the ownership was vital to both, if, as both expected, they were one day to come to blows again. Brandenburg and Neuburg seized on the districts, and seemed likely to fight over them, but patched up their quarrel (May, 1609), in face of the threat that the Empire would seize and sequestrate the country; for this would secure it for Catholic and Spanish purposes. The Archduke Leopold, Bishop of Strasburg, was sent down the Rhine to take possession; a new Catholic union of South Germany, the 'Holy League' of Würzburg, composed of Bavarians, Swabians, and Franconians, with Maximilian of Bavaria as its head, was now formed, and aimed at a Catholic Germany as distinct from an Austrian Empire; Henry IV played on this German anti-imperial feeling, and allowed Maximilian to hope that his influence would support him in his candidature at the next imperial vacancy. These two Leagues alike menaced the independence and power of the Hapsburgs. When, however, the sequestration took place, and it was found that the Protestant claimants appealed to the Union for help, and the Archduke-Bishop to the Holy League, then it was felt that the voice of Henry IV must make itself heard. He declared, as all must have expected, for the Brandenburg-Neuburg claimants, and promised active help. The Evangelic Union thereon held a great assembly at Hall, in Swabia (January, 1610): France and Venice, Savoy and the United Provinces, were all represented; it was believed that even the Pope himself looked with friendly eyes on their wish to curb the Austro-Spanish power, which was far too strong in Italy: he agreed with Henry in thinking that if that power were quietly

allowed to settle down on the Lower Rhine, it would bring the Netherlands into imminent peril, would coerce the North German Princes, and surround France as with a circle of fire from the western end of the Pyrenees, along the side of Italy, and down the Rhine even to the Low Countries; a circle broken only where France and Switzerland touched at a single point, at Geneva.

At this moment Henry fell madly in love with the Princess of Condé; it was an affair which had not merely its buffoon-side, in the King's half-insane courting of her, his wild journeys after her, his disguises, his abandonment of all outward dignity, as well as of all essential morality of character; like everything in his reign, it was also mixed up with Spanish intrigue and interference. It is certain that Condé made no secret of his opinion that the Dauphin was base-born: that the King's first marriage was not truly annulled by a Papal divorce, and that, Henry having no son by Margaret, he himself, as head of the younger branch of the Bourbons, was the next heir to the throne. It can never be known how far Spain had fostered this belief in him: the King saw him always surrounded by malcontents: Condé eventually took refuge with the Spaniards at Brussels, nor would they yield him up.

These causes led Henry to prepare vigorously and seriously for a great war. In April 1610 all was well-nigh ready. Épernon should command the infantry, Sully the artillery, Nevers the horse; Swiss mercenaries, six thousand strong, were to be led by Rohan: the seven Marshals of France marshalled the companies of men-at-arms. Châlons, Mezières, and Metz were the chief rendezvous; the King hoped to have thirty thousand men on foot, to join them on the 15th of May, and to march at their head into the Duchies: a second army under Lesdiguières was to pass into Italy, and, joining the Duke of Savoy and the Venetians, to conquer the Duchy of Milan; a third army should quietly observe the Pyrenees. Prince Maurice of Nassau with twenty thousand Dutch was to join the King in Cleves.

At home the Queen was named Regent, with a council of fifteen at her side; she wished to be solemnly crowned and consecrated, to give more weight to her office. Meanwhile the Court teemed, as of old, with intrigues; the Queen herself kept up communication with Spain, and was the first traitor of the realm: the old passions arose once more, the old Catholic spirit running high; Paris was much agitated. The King's departure was delayed for the consecration: he was full of anxieties, eager to be off, afraid of his capital; still he went about almost unguarded, with his old courage; and on the 14th of May, 1610, two days before the day finally fixed for his departure, had himself driven, with an escort of only five gentlemen, to pay one more visit to Sully, who was lying ill at his beloved Arsenal. As he passed through the streets a block took place, and, while the carriage waited, a miscreant named Ravaillac stepping coolly up, put his foot on the wheel, and plunged a knife into the King's heart. So ended all Henry's great plans and long preparations; so died the best and greatest, after all, of the Bourbon Kings.

Men had noticed how the King's sensitive nature, so easily impressed, had been roused by the crisis of his affairs. His impatient words—the old war-horse neighing for the battle—'When shall I get away?'—'Shall I ever escape from Paris?'—'I shall never leave the town alive';—these seemed afterwards prophecies of impending fate. It was remembered, too, afterwards, that he had been longer and apparently more absorbed than usual in his devotions, that he had been seen on his knees in the middle of the night, that he had expressed distress at being interrupted: all these things, born of his high-strung nature, his warm heart and disposition open to receive the leading impression of the moment, were treasured up and told from man to man, when the great calamity had befallen him. The King, however lightly moral obligations and theological dogmas sat on him, was of the stuff of which religious men are made; and clearly, in this supreme moment of his fate, his spirit turned to God.

No such catastrophe is depicted in all the pages of tragedy. The attention of Europe was at that hour fixed on Henry; in his hand were the fortunes of the world: friends and foes alike held their breath and watched with intensest interest, with swaying hopes and fears, the course of things. Then in a single instant the tall figure of the dark fanatic hides the King from view, and when men look again, he is gone. Gone in an instant all his far-reaching plans; gone the great peril to the Austro-Spanish house; gone the hope of settlement of the German difficulty. That was deferred for a few years, and then burst forth into the terrible struggle of the Thirty Years' War, in which France would not interfere as a principal but as a secondary figure. France herself was plunged once more into confusion and trouble, till the iron will and hand of one, who at the moment of the assassination was the obscure bishop of an obscure little town in the West of France, carried out and justified the policy of Henry, and once more rescued his country from the weakness and desolation of civil broils.

Still, none the less, for the time the change was strange and marvellous. As men saw the great storm gather, saw the three armies of the King moving, like thunderclouds across the sky, towards the mountains; as they noted the growing darkness, and looked each moment for the first flash and the crashing fall of the thunderbolt, suddenly the whole scene changed, and fire and tempest were quenched in floods of tears.

CHAPTER III.

Mary de' Medici and the Regency.

A.D. 1610–1624.

Had Ravaillac any accomplices? Was the Spanish Court involved in the crime? Was Mary de' Medici aware of what was going on? No one can ever know. When they came to tell her, she showed little astonishment, she feigned no sorrow. Probably the murder was but the sudden expression of a general feeling, which pervaded the whole Spanish faction in France and in Europe, and which falling like a spark on an ignorant and fanatical nature at once caused the explosion, even as the high tension of feeling at Rome half a century before had brought about the attempt of Accolti on the life of Pius IV. Ravaillac himself declared that he had no partners in his enterprise; yet stories floated about of the personages who had communicated with him, and of the confessions he had made, suppressed because of their damaging character. Such tales as these are the scum on the top of a great effervescence. It is best to believe that he had no direct accomplices, and that he instinctively did the work of the party of which he thereby became, in a sense, the representative.

The great plans of Henry IV were of course arrested; it is true that a French army, composed chiefly of mercenaries,—for as yet France was thought incapable of raising infantry of her own,—was sent to Jülich, and in union with Prince Maurice drove out the Catholics (Sept. 1610), restoring that town to

the two claimants, Brandenburg and Neuburg. But nothing farther was attempted; the different armies were disbanded, and the whole matter adjourned for nine years. Mary de' Medici refused to mix herself up in German affairs; if the King of Spain would promise not to help the disaffected in France she would stand aside; everything looked as if a great change of policy was imminent.

It was well known how Spanish the Court was, how unpopular the policy of the other party: the moment that the King's death was announced, the Queen, relying on his openly-declared intention of naming her Regent, seized the power, which in theory belonged to the Princes of the Blood Royal. There were no national bulwarks against such a coup d'état; Henry himself had trampled down the feeble liberties of the country, which, mixed up and confounded with disloyal attempts at independence, had made the chief trouble of his reign. But while the hopes of constitutional life had set for ever, the hopes of noble privilege and selfishness had only been repressed, not crushed: with the death of the King they sprang up again. At the first moment Sully quite expected vengeance to be taken on him for his harshness, his stern exactions, his severity to the nobles, his known connexion with Henry's anti-Spanish policy. He started from the Bastille, his head-quarters, where the treasure lay, with a large following of friends: his company grew till it reached three hundred men. As he rode towards the Louvre, warning after warning reached him; and, his courage failing, he turned back and fortified himself against a siege in the Bastille, sending couriers northward to call up the Swiss. Mary, however, was not strong enough to wreak vengeance on him; she could not afford to provoke opposition, and did her best to smooth things down. She persuaded Sully to visit her at the Louvre, received him cordially, showed him to the young King as his father's most trusted minister and friend. Sully gave up all thought of opposition; Mary got possession of the treasure; and both were satisfied.

This reconciliation exactly expressed the state of things as

they then stood. Mary would gladly have reversed the whole policy of the late reign: but her title as Regent was insecure, and she could not venture on any strong steps: all she could achieve was an uneasy equilibrium for a few years, which allowed her to remain at the head of affairs.

Henry IV had left three sons and three daughters: Louis, the eldest, was but nine years old, a gentle boy, who showed promise of intelligence and bodily activity. His mother was Regent; the Dukes of Guise and Épernon were at her back; most of the governors of cities and provinces had come up to Paris for the Queen's consecration, and all recognised her authority; the army was favourable, the people of no account or indifferent; the Parliament of Paris appeared to take up a political position of no little importance when it was asked to sanction her assumption of the duties of a Regent. The Princes of the blood, three only in number (not counting the King's little children), Condé, head of the elder branch, Conti and Soissons, Condé's uncles, were unable to assert their own claims; for Condé was in exile, Conti a man of no influence, and Soissons, who was thus the virtual head of the party of the Princes, was mean and venal; and as the Queen Mother did not stint her bribes, having great offices to give and Henry's treasure under her hand, she easily bought his acquiescence: for the government of Normandy, two hundred thousand crowns in cash, and a pension, Soissons was well-content to leave things alone in Paris. There was a Council of Regency, composed in the proper way: the wires of it were pulled by an inner cabinet, formed of Concini and his wife Leonora Galigai, the Nuncio, the Spanish Ambassador, and the chief supporters of the Spanish policy, Sillery, Épernon, Villeroy, Jeannin, and Father Cotton. Of these Épernon represented the old League-noblesse, while the leading spirit of the whole was Concini, who was made Marshal de l'Ancre, and who entirely ruled the Queen Mother. He was a foreigner, an adventurer, haughty and greedy; how could the realm be in peace with him in command? Yet his conduct of affairs was not devoid of prudence; even Richelieu

has a good word for him. The Huguenots were left unmolested and were quiet; the old royalist nobles, and the great officers in command in the country thought that their time was come: 'The day of Kings is past; that of grandees and Princes has arrived; we must make the best of it,' was their phrase. It must be remembered that these lords who aimed at independence were not the old feudal nobles of France; they had disappeared or become obscure; but these were either the few Princes of the Lilies, or the noblesse created chiefly during the last century from among the royal officers. The distinction gives us the measure of advance of the Kingly power. It has been well said[1] that there was no real principle in their action; that under Louis XI the struggle had been for feudal Lordship and the independence of a great system; under Charles IX for political and religious freedom, but under Louis XIII it had dropped to a paltry scramble of selfish noblemen for money and place, ending in that poor comedy, the war of the Fronde. 'Luxury,' says Richelieu, 'was at this time so great, thanks to the way in which the King squandered money on the grandees, thanks also to the Queen's love of splendour, that a scramble for more money was always going on,' and took the place of any higher or better ambitions[2].

The treasure in the Bastille then was the foundation on which the Queen Mother's regency was really built up. It was distributed with unsparing hand: even Condé, who returned to Court, did not disdain to name his price: he and his friends carried off a goodly sum. None the less did he, directly the money was spent, set himself in opposition to the ruling favourite; he became the centre of the disaffected noblesse. With his friends, Bouillon among them, he withdrew to Sedan, and thence issued a declaration to the effect that the government of the country was all astray; that the Princes and grandees were wrongfully excluded from the councils of the Regency; that the States General ought to be convoked; that the people were miserably

[1] By La Vallée, Histoire de France, iii. p. 78.
[2] Richelieu, Mémoires (Michaud II. vii. p. 58).

oppressed. Concini treated with the malcontents, found their price, and bought them off with offices, appointments, ready money; and the insurrection was appeased (A. D. 1614). It was of evil omen; the grandees learnt by it that if they did but threaten enough they were sure to be paid for it; the government had entered on that cycle of vicious weakness in which a strong, or at least a noisy, faction can get whatever it wants, and finds in each success a reason and encouragement for fresh turbulence.

Concini had promised them that the States General should be convoked: the Queen Mother, thinking to strengthen the position of her clique, caused the young King's majority to be declared, and the States were summoned to meet at Paris.

For two things are these States General notable; otherwise their history is insignificant. The first is that they never met again for a hundred and seventy-five years, and then met only to begin the age of Revolution; the other is that among them sat the future ruler of France, Armand du Plessis of Richelieu, Bishop of Luçon, who had already made himself a name: he was selected, young as he was, to present the 'cahiers' as orator of the Clergy. The Third Estate and the Clergy quarrelled over the old question as to the basis of the royal authority; the Third Estate condemning the opinions so popular in the last century, that a heretic King should be disobeyed and even killed. The Parliament of Paris took part in the fray, siding with the Third Estate; the Court in alarm enjoined silence on both. Their remonstrance as to the state of the people was conceived in very lamentable terms; nothing, however, came of it: 'your poor people are but skin and bone; worn out, downbeat, more dead than alive: we beseech you to do something to assuage the disorders of finance.' For Henry's reign and Sully's organisation had not done much to relieve the people; and now what hope was there for them?

Early in 1615 the Estates separated; the Parliament of Paris, supported by the malcontent nobles, seemed still to aim at the control of government: it issued an invitation to princes

and peers to deliberate on the state of affairs: when, however, it seemed about to come to open warfare with the Court, the men of law were prudent enough to see that they would only be the catspaw in the hands of the soldiers, and made their peace with the Regent.

This year saw the ratification of the agreement come to with the Spanish Court; the boy-King was married to Anne of Austria, and another of the notable women of this woman's period appears on the stage. The Princes, Huguenot and Royalist, became more and more turbulent; for this marriage offended and, as they thought, menaced them: a scattered uneasy warfare began; Concini again met them with the old weapons, and by the treaty of Loudun (A.D. 1616) bought off the malcontents. Condé obtained five strongholds, with offices and money for his adherents: large payments were made to all the chief nobles. The Council was reformed, and the young Bishop of Luçon, whom the Regent admired and the Marshal Ancre thought to use, became a member of it.

This arrangement made Condé for the moment the chief man in France; and with prudence and patriotism he might have played a considerable part in his country's history. But he cared only for selfish ends; plundered the state, and showed towards the Queen's party the fatal pride of his race and place. Unable to endure it, Concini arrested him, and threw him into prison, while he endeavoured to strengthen his own position with an army of German mercenaries. It came now once more to threat of open war. The nobles declared with loud cries that they would overthrow the usurper and rescue the King from tutelage, nay, even from peril of his life. Richelieu's genius and hand of iron were now behind the foreign favourite; once more the nobles were checked, and this time with vigour. The young King, however, had wearied of Concini; he had found a new favourite, Charles D'Albert of Luynes, a man skilful in taming the falcon for the boy, whose passion was the chase; he was tired of Concini's mastery, of his mother's authority, and longed to be free. Luynes, heart and soul with the turbulent

nobles, though he was not in reality one of them [1], set himself to supplant the Queen Mother and her favourite; and succeeded so well with Louis, that he persuaded him to do what he was already longing to do—to free himself from tutelage. Orders were given for the arrest of Concini: if he resisted, the guard should kill him: he did resist, and perished (A. D. 1617). Leonora Galigai, his wife, was arrested, tried for sorcery, and executed; sentinels were placed at the Regent's doors: the party of the noblesse triumphed, for the King was taken out of the hands of the old Court: Richelieu fell with his friends, and it might have seemed as if he had miscalculated the strength of parties, and that his career was over. In fact, it only gave him wisdom for the future, and strengthened him in his firm resolve one day to bring the nobles to account.

The Queen Mother withdrew to Blois, Richelieu to Luçon: the King proclaimed that he had taken the command into his own hands: the princes and nobles flocked up to secure and enjoy their triumph: with Luynes, a supple adventurer, Italian rather than French, as his favourite and minister, the young King was no more free than before, though perhaps as free as his nature permitted.

Mary de' Medici was not the woman to yield without a struggle: the little Court of Blois became the centre of fresh intrigues for a couple of years: Épernon attempted a rising in her behalf, and shut himself up with her in Angoulême, hoping that the South would espouse her cause. The movement failed completely; for no one stirred. The government however were much alarmed, and Luynes, hoping to appease the disturbance without a civil war, took the bold step of recalling Richelieu. That astute prelate was soon able to reconcile the two parties, in appearance at least: the government of Anjou was given to the Queen Mother, and considerable state and wealth. As time went on the greater nobles liked Luynes

[1] By origin of a Tuscan family; the Alberti came into the Venaissin in the fifteenth century; one of the family was made Count of Luynes in 1540. Charles d'Albert was born in the Venaissin, and therefore neither by origin nor by birth was he a Frenchman.

no better than they had liked Concini; the Court at Angers became the centre of dissatisfaction; governors of provinces followed with the tide; the Huguenots once more grew troublesome, and all the western side of France disturbed. Thus sides had changed: the great nobles, always in opposition, had seen with pleasure the overthrow of the Regent and Concini; now, offended at the pretensions of another upstart, and eager for the prizes which ever followed faction, they rallied round the Queen Mother for the overthrow of a second Court-party.

The King displayed unexpected vigour. In 1620 he put himself at the head of the royal forces, and marched for Normandy: 'never Prince so regular and attentive at the Council-board, so fore-seeing as to what he does and orders, or so judicious in taking or rejecting good or bad advice[1].' They tried to dissuade him from going; on the contrary, he decided to march into the heart of the disaffection[2]; he secured Rouen, just in time; won back the allegiance of Caen, and then, Normandy being quieted, passed through Brittany, marching towards Angers, the head-quarters of the trouble. His mother came out against him; she was ill-supported, and did not venture to fight: the young King would gladly have crushed the revolt, but Luynes, timid and insecure, thought conciliation safer for himself, and made Louis treat: one brisk skirmish took place, to the complete discomfiture of the nobles: and then they were willing to get their pay, and to defer their misconduct till another profitable occasion might arise. Richelieu negociated a peace between the parties; the Queen Mother was reconciled to her son, the nobles were once more appeased with gifts (August, 1620). After peace had been signed at Angers, the King passed with his army into Béarn, where the Huguenots, and indeed the whole of the inhabitants, were in ferment. For in 1617 Louis had declared the country absolutely united to the Crown, had ordered the establishment of Catholicism, and

[1] Archives Curieuses, Cimber et Danjou, II. ii. p. 209.

[2] Richelieu in his Memoirs makes no remark on Louis' energy at this moment, but that does not prove much.

the restoration of Church property to the clergy. The Estates of Béarn and the Parliament naturally resisted, and threatened to fight for the independence of the district. Louis XIII soon bore down all opposition, planted the Catholic worship, garrisoned the strong places, and reduced the district to submission. It was now perhaps that the young King was at his best. Such stronger qualities as he had inherited from his father had play, he was not merely the puppet of his favourite, nor as yet overshadowed by the great minister whom he afterwards served and feared. Men thought him brave like his father: he had also his father's powers of endurance, and his love of the chase; 'no peril amazes him, nor toil wearies': he would spend hours ferreting out in the cold[1], to the utter disgust of his courtiers: his appearance was weak, with long hair, soft features, oval face, and an amiable mouth: his eyes were fine and lively, and his intelligence quick. In habits he was temperate, 'eats little, drinks less'; he was a beautiful rider, and fond of active exercises: artistic also, and full of religious sentiment. On the other hand, the clue to his weakness lay in his lack of power of will: as time went on, he grew more and more insignificant, gloomily amusing himself with his birds, or riding at the chase. He had no sense of due proportion; trifles to him were as important as the most serious affairs; he tired of friends and favourites, deposing and chasing them away for the most trivial reasons. The dismissal of his comrade D'Humières well illustrates this weakness of his character. The King could not endure red hair, and D'Humières, his first Gentleman of the Chamber, having unluckily locks of that colour, had them carefully dyed, and thus concealing the unkindness of nature long escaped the King's displeasure. But as ill-luck would have it, one day out hunting the King and his following were caught

[1] See the Portrait du Roy, envoyé par le sieur de Bellemaure au sieur de Mirancourt à Venise. Cimber et Danjou, Archives Curieuses, 2me Série, i. p. 401; an absurdly partial picture of the King, as he was in 1618.

See also a very discriminating sketch of him by Lord Herbert of Cherbury, who was ambassador to the Court of France in 1619. He says that the King was singularly active, and indifferent to cold; of good parts, though ignorant; a sad stammerer; suspicious also, and apt to dissimulate.

in a great rain-storm, which drenched them: and as the pelting rain went on, the dye was gradually washed out of the unhappy courtier's hair, which grew redder every minute; until at last the King discerned the obnoxious colour, and at once dismissed the poor man from his presence[1].

Louis was faithless and cruel; and he had also that bad quality of the race, that he tried to draw a veil of religion over the excesses he committed: he kept most solemn service of worship in the midst of the worst excesses of his army, when Frenchmen were murdering Frenchmen in cold blood, and indulging unchecked in wild debauch at the expense of their brethren.

A more serious outbreak now impended. The great agitation of Germany, where the first period of the Thirty Years' War, the Bohemian struggle, had just ended, found an echo in the breasts of the Huguenots; their sympathies were all with the Calvinists of the Palatinate. The overthrow of Arminianism in the United Provinces, bringing with it the scandalous execution of Olden-Barneveldt, and the ascendency of the party of Maurice of Nassau, the Republican-Calvinistic party, tended also to excite their feelings. On this restless ambitious temper the King's high-handed treatment of Béarn fell like a spark. They did not understand, how should they? that the way in which France would march to the help of the Protestants in Germany must be over their own bodies: that, just as in the last century Henry II had coerced the Huguenots at home while he allied himself with the Protestant princes abroad, so now, on a larger scale, Richelieu would first crush their attempts at independence, and then go on to interfere against the House of Austria, protecting those opinions there against which he waged merciless war at home; and that with apparent contradiction he would secure a firm autocratic monarchy in France, while he helped the Princes of Germany to assert their independence against the central Imperial power. On this contradiction was built up the greatness of France in the next age: for it was a contradiction which only meant that the monarchy of France must be

[1] Mémoires de Mr. L.C.D.R. (M. le Comte de Rochefort), p. 61.

strong and united, while her neighbours should be kept weak and disorganised; that the religious question was to her only secondary, the political all-important.

This the Huguenots could not see: they aimed at the independence which the Edict of Nantes had promised them; they were still full of those ideas of a Christian Republic, which we are wont to associate with the name of Calvin; they aimed at a position which might well have been compatible with a constitutional monarchy, but was quite impossible where the King meant to be autocratic. It is with deep regret that we see, one after another, the elements which might have produced good and liberal government in France withering away before the terrible presence of the monarchy.

The Huguenots of the South revolted directly the King's back was turned: in the Cevennes, in Languedoc, above all in Béarn, along the Western coast, men were up in arms: a great assembly was held in the Calvinist capital La Rochelle; the party was divided into 'circles,' after the German pattern[1], each with its commandant; Bouillon was named general-in-chief: the Huguenots demanded freedom of action and association; they spoke of 'the Republic of the Reformed Churches in France and Béarn'; and sent envoys to England, the United Provinces, North Germany. Though the movement threatened to be formidable, the Huguenots had no real strength; the chief leaders refused to serve: Bouillon and La Trémoille stood aside; Lesdiguières even tendered his sword to the King, and fought in the royal army: Rohan became the head of the movement, and, had things been more even, might have played a great part in those days. His brother Soubise alone of the Huguenot chiefs supported him.

An army was raised in 1621 to crush them: Luynes was named Constable, and Lesdiguières his marshal-general of camp and army; Louis XIII himself took the chief command:—he was not devoid of energy and enterprise; what he

[1] These Circles of Rochelle were offensive to the French, as being an imitation of German decentralisation.

lacked was ability to command, and strength of will to stand alone.

The royal army went down into the South-west: Saumur on the Loire was taken by treachery: Louis XIII promised the grand old governor, Du Plessis Mornay, that he would never take from him a command entrusted to him thirty-five years before by Henry: yet no sooner had the veteran, who was noble enough to believe a King's promises, admitted Louis into the castle, than he was told that prudence would not allow the King to leave a Huguenot in command of so important a link in the communications: Du Plessis Mornay indignantly refused the bribe of money and a Marshal's staff offered him in exchange, and retired with dignity, pure in the end as at the beginning of his career, to his own castle in Poitou, where he died soon after at the age of seventy-five[1]. S. Jean d'Angely in Poitou, defended by Soubise, made gallant resistance, but fell: Épernon was detached to blockade La Rochelle; Montmorency to reduce the difficult country of the Cevennes; the main force laid siege to Montauban, the second capital of the Huguenots, lying on the Tarn not far from its juncture with the Garonne, in Quercy. The memory of the brutal conduct of the royal army in captured places, which gave the defenders the courage of despair, the stubbornness of the walls, the heroism of the Huguenots, wore out the King's strength. Rohan threw himself into the town; the Duke of Sully, who was hard by, endeavoured in vain to mediate. The King was forced to raise the seige (November, 1621). At Monheur on the Garonne, whither Luynes had led the King, in order that the campaign might not seem to end in disgrace, the Constable was attacked by army fever and died. The little town of Monheur was taken, pillaged, and burnt; its garrison murdered, its inhabitants were happy if they saved their lives.

[1] We may gather the temper in which Richelieu writes of the Huguenots from the way he speaks of this noble and loyal gentleman: 'Mourut en âge décrépit, jusqu'auquel Dieu l'avoit attendu à pénitence'; and he adds, with a miserable pleasantry, that it would have been well had he been 'Mornay (mort-né) d'effet, comme il en portait le nom.' Richelieu, Mémoires (Michaud, II. vii. p. 286).

This petty piece of vengeance pleased Louis well, but Luynes' death still better; he was weary of him, and had begun, after his kind, to hate him; ere long some dark catastrophe might have hurried him off, had not he fallen victim to the fever.

The King returned to Paris, for the year was almost ended, and there a tangled skein of intrigues wound itself round his person. Every one knew he could not do without a favourite or some one on whom to lean; and every one aspired to the vacant place. Bassompierre, whom the King liked, might probably have filled it; but he was too little eager for ambitious triumphs to care for it: he saw that the King would fall into the hands either of the Queen Mother, that is of Richelieu, or of his cousin, the Prince of Condé. These two ere long led the two factions; the former the courtier-party, counselling peace, the latter the party of ministers, who wished the King to take no favourite but to govern through them, and to press on the war. The old ministers Jeannin and Sillery, the President and the Chancellor, who were now recalled to the King's counsels, fearing the pride and power of Condé, advised Louis to readmit the Queen Mother; and though the other ministers resisted, it was done. Guided by the advice of Richelieu, she showed sagacity and moderation; nevertheless the King, who had a weak love for the show and movement of war, and perhaps even thought himself a warrior, was allured by Condé into a fresh campaign against the Huguenots.

This campaign in the South was marked by some successes and much cruelty; there were cold-blooded massacres, broken faith and savage pillage, with the wonted horrors. The King showed himself not only weak but cruel:—the most mischievous and contemptible combination that can exist. La Rochelle, Montauban, and Royan, at the mouth of the Gironde, were the only places of importance that held for the Huguenots; Épernon reduced Royan, and laid it in ruins; he was then told off to observe La Rochelle, while the King, under Condé's tutelage, marched for lower Guyenne. There he took place after place, treating the towns with the utmost rigour; the few remaining

nobles of the Huguenot side seemed all to give way: La Force was bought over; Sully had to surrender his fortress of Cadenac; Lesdiguières, their most distinguished soldier, became a Catholic, and was named Constable of France; the Marquis of Châtillon, the old Admiral's grandson, yielded up himself and Aigues Mortes; only Rohan and Soubise remained; Soubise was in England vainly asking help; Rohan in the Cevennes raising forces to secure Montpellier and Nimes. The war was upheld chiefly by the towns and the Calvinistic ministers; the old connexion of the noblesse with it was well-nigh worn out. A diversion attempted by those two gallant German adventurers, Count Mansfeld and Christian of Brunswick, on the borders of Champagne failed completely; they were compelled to take refuge in Hainault, and to attach themselves to the Prince of Orange (August 1622).

Louis XIII, still in Condé's hands, passed on through lower Languedoc, took Nimes and other towns, and laid siege to Montpellier. The Huguenots sued for peace; Condé insisted on their extermination; moderate counsels however prevailed; the Queen Mother's party got the upper hand, and Condé was forced to withdraw from Court. The war was at once closed by a fresh treaty, dated 9th October, 1623; the Edict of Nantes was confirmed, while the Huguenots were forbidden to hold political meetings, and were ordered to demolish their strongholds. La Rochelle and Montauban were named as their only towns of refuge. In them they might keep their own garrisons, exclude royal troops, nay, if they would, even shut their gates on the King himself.

The King was once more without a guide, without a favourite, but his fate was upon him. A few months more of uncertain drifting, and he will fall into the hands of the greatest politician France has ever seen, Cardinal Richelieu; under his hand the King will be effaced, his cold disposition and narrow intelligence will accept and be convinced by the grandeur of his master's views; convinced, he will obey, and we shall enter on the period in which the disruptive forces in France will be coerced, and the

elements of freedom and constitutional life stamped down; while patriotism, and a firm belief in the destinies of the nation will be fostered and grow strong; France will assert her high place in Europe. Richelieu who had already in 1622 received the Cardinal's hat, entered the King's Council on the $\frac{19}{29}$th of April, 1624.

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